

THE CASH INTRIGUE

GEORGE
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"Tell me what I should do," said Elsie

THE CASH INTRIGUE

A Fantastic Melodrama of Modern Finance

By
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THE MAKING OF BOBBY BURNIT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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CHAPTER I

WHEREIN PHILLIP KELVIN VISITS WALL STREET
WITH UNASSAILABLE CREDENTIALS

IT was shortly after nine o'clock when a brisk young man stepped out of a taxicab into the dim crevice of Broad Street, followed by a huge negro bearing a suit-case. The young man was evidently a complete stranger in the locality, for he looked about him with frank curiosity, pausing for a moment to wonder at the daily farce of the curb-market before turning in at the doorway of a narrow stair. Nestled back amid a number of alleged brokers, who dealt hilariously in such "securities" as Wireless Motor Preferred, he found the offices of Henry Galleon and Company, one of the few legitimate firms which, entrenched in their own natural conservativeness, had refused to move when the curb invasion came. Passing through the outer office, where a gray-haired "boy"

would soon begin to post ticker quotations on a small blackboard for the benefit of a scant score of antiquated and empty arm-chairs, he entered the adjoining room, where, behind corroded iron grilles, a row of elderly clerks worked quietly over ponderous books. At the end of the narrow lane in front of these desks was a small door marked simply "Offices," beyond which door a wizened man, bent with years but still active, looked up from a battered and scratched walnut desk as ancient as he, waiting silently for the square-jawed visitor to introduce himself.

"Mr. Galleon?" inquired the new-comer.

"Upon what business, please?" asked the other mechanically.

"I only care to talk with Mr. Galleon himself." Very pleasant about it indeed, but the chin, though it had a dimple in it, stuck out most aggressively.

The old man arose with a slight, protesting frown, asked for a card, and took it into an inner room.

Henry Galleon was about the same age as his secretary, but he was erect. His face and his bald head were pink with a baby's pinkness, his white hair glistened like silk, and the brightness of his eyes was almost infantile. He looked up from the card inquiringly.

"Phillip Kelvin?" he said. "Who's Phillip Kelvin? I never heard of him."

"I don't know," replied the secretary. "He's a very capable-looking young man, and by no means a New-Yorker, I should think. He has a tremendously large negro with him; the largest one I ever saw. The negro is carrying a big suit-case."

Henry Galleon pondered that matter quietly, smoothing his chin with the thumb and fingers of one hand, after the unbreakable habit of a man who has once worn a beard. Fanatics with bombs had menaced the Wall Street district of late, and they might come in any guise.

"Find out his business, Messmer," was the sane conclusion.

"I did ask, but he insisted on seeing you personally."

Galleon frowned. "If he can't explain properly to you, let him go. You are authorized to transact all necessary business in my name."

Messmer went out with that message, though he softened it somewhat. Young Kelvin had evidently expected such an answer, for he smiled and turned to the negro.

"Here, Sam," he directed, "put the case on this desk."

The staid and evenly balanced Messmer frowned as the suit-case was slammed upon the top of his tangle of papers, but he waited with some curiosity while young Kelvin unlocked it. Messmer had half

expected to see a set of books or a sample of some new office contrivance, but when the lid was thrown back he was struck dumb by the surprising contents of that unpretentious bit of luggage.

"These," said young Kelvin smilingly, running his hand down in the suit-case and fluttering the edges of its contents, "these are my letters of introduction. Kindly tell Mr. Galleon about them, and that I will not talk to any one but himself."

"Yes, sir!" said Messmer with surprising alacrity. "Yes, sir; yes, sir!"

He was positively white and trembling when he went back into Galleon's office. He was rubbing his hands together nervously, and his tottering footsteps had become a double-quick shuffle.

"That suit-case!" he gasped. "The young man has just opened it, and it is full to the top with *nothing but money!*"

"Money?" expostulated Mr. Galleon.

"Money, sir, money!" repeated Messmer; "paper money, all of high denomination. Solid packages of bills! He said that these were his letters of reference, and that he would talk business with no one but you."

Mr. Galleon turned upon old Messmer peremptorily. "Why don't you show the young gentleman in?" he demanded.

He inspected young Kelvin sharply as Phillip came into the room, and found him to be a well-dressed, clean-looking chap, with an extremely clear eye and an extremely healthy complexion, his fairness and his lithe slenderness being made all the more striking by contrast with the gigantic Sam, a perfect Hercules, whose almost jet-black face was scarred with a deep cut upon his left cheek, and the lobe of whose right ear had been neatly sliced away.

"Your letters of recommendation are perfectly satisfactory, Mr. Kelvin," said the broker smiling, as he glanced down at the card again to make sure of the name. "What can we do for you?"

For answer young Kelvin opened the suit-case and took from it eight packages of bills, which he counted over carefully. "Here are two hundred thousand dollars," said he. "I wish you to sell for me one thousand shares each of these four stocks." He laid a slip of paper upon Mr. Galleon's desk. The broker did not look at the memorandum at once; he looked first at the packages of bills, and then at the suit-case. He made a hasty calculation, and then hesitated. If those eight packages contained two hundred thousand dollars, and the rest of the packages were composed of bills of similar denomination, that suit-case must contain not less than two million dollars, cash!

"Of course, Mr. Kelvin, it is none of my affair," he began hesitantly, "but it is positively criminal of you to be carrying that enormous amount of currency about with you. It ought to be banked. You must consider," and he smiled again, "that I would just as soon have your check as this money; in fact, much rather."

"It is one of the strict conditions of my dealing with you that our operations are to be transacted in currency. I shall neither give nor receive checks."

"But it is dangerous," insisted Mr. Galleon.

Phillip smiled. "Ordinarily, yes," he admitted, "but in the present juncture I consider banks much more dangerous. Have you a good deposit vault?"

"I have deposit boxes in the best vaults in town." This a little stiffly.

"Then I must insist that you keep this cash under your own lock and key. Use no more than twenty dollars per share for initial margins, and hold the balance in reserve."

Galleon frowned and shook his head. "It is an absurd thing to do, especially now," he protested. "There prevails, at present, a peculiar condition which you may not understand, Mr. Kelvin; it even puzzles old members of the Street. While the market is sluggish, money is very tight, a most rare and unusual state of affairs. It would be folly to

let this amount of cash lie idle when it could command such an unusual rate."

"Do you wish to handle my deals or not?" and young Kelvin's jaws came shut with a snap.

Galleon studied the matter over in silence for a while. "How does it happen that you come to me?" he asked.

"That is very simple," replied Kelvin with a smile. "From perfectly authentic sources I secured a list of all the Board of Trade members in New York who do absolutely no bucketing and no trading upon their own account; and you happened to head that list."

Henry Galleon bent forward eagerly. "How many are there?" he asked.

"Less than would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. There are just five, and I was given a doubt concerning one of those."

Chuckling to himself, Henry Galleon began counting the money. He touched a button and there stepped energetically into the room, from a rear door, a young fellow of broad shoulders and bronzed face, who was the personification of cheerful good-humor. There was a certain careless ease in the very flow of his cravat which told of a happy-go-lucky disposition, and superabundant health was visible in every line of his figure.

Galleon pushed forward the slip of paper which

Kelvin had just given him. "Selling orders for the first thing this morning, at the market," he explained.

The young man paid no attention to the slip. "Why, hello, Phill!" he exclaimed, and rushing across to young Kelvin, he grasped that gentleman by the right hand and pounded him vigorously upon the shoulder with his left. "It's been an age since I saw you, old boy!" he roared with delight. "Where did you drop in from?"

"Tennessee," replied Kelvin. "By George, you're looking well, Rensselaer. I'm as much surprised to see you here, so far away from the mavericks and the rustlers, as you are to see me."

"Oh, I'm not in such a different occupation from cow-punching," laughed Rensselaer. "I'm Mr. Galleon's floor-member over on the Exchange, and it's much the same sort of exercise. Where are you stopping?"

"At the Esplanade. What time do you get through work?"

"A little after three."

"Come up to see me," invited Kelvin. "I'll be in all day."

"I sure will!" declared Rensselaer. "Then we'll go out and see if we can't get some canned tomatoes. Do you remember how we used to go down to Abe Turner's store at Greaser Gulch and

buy canned fruit and spear it out with a jack-knife?"

"I don't think I shall ever forget it," laughed Kelvin. "I never want to. However, I think we can find something better than jerked beef at the Esplanade. I'll wait for you with a great deal of pleasure."

As soon as he had gone, Galleon turned eagerly to young Rensselaer. "Who was that?" he demanded.

"Phill Kelvin. I used to know him on a Montana ranch when we were cow-punching together, five or six years ago."

"Was he there for his health?" asked Galleon.

"I don't think so," replied Rensselaer with a chuckle. "As I remember him he had too much health, if anything; but that was about all he possessed. I bunked with him for six months, and there never was a finer fellow on earth — so long as he had his own way."

"He looks like that," said Galleon, smiling.

"Only more so," returned Rensselaer. "Out there he was bull-headed about everything he started after — little things or big ones. If he once set his head to get something or to do something, even the boss side-tracked."

"Huh!" grunted Galleon. "Where did he get his money?"

" "I didn't know he had any," returned Rensselaer in surprise.

"Look here."

Rensselaer stepped around to where he could see inside of his employer's desk, and Galleon, with his thumb, fluttered the edges of the packages of money that lay there.

"He just left this here; two hundred thousand dollars, to margin those four thousand shares of stock fifty points. Did you see that suit-case he had? Stuffed full of greenbacks! There couldn't have been less than two million dollars in it!"

Rensselaer whistled, and they were both silent for a little while.

"Well," Rensselaer finally observed, "however he got it, he didn't steal it. More power to him. I hope he digs up two million more." He paused a moment and then chuckled. "Kelvin used to have some queer ideas," he went on. "He used to tell me about them, lying awake at night in camp, or when we were loafing around down in the valleys where the long grass grows. I could never make out just whether he really meant it, or if he was doing a lot of dry kidding. He could do that, you know, without ever cracking a smile. My ambition, at that time, was to become a great general, but his loco point was that a republican form of government was bound to fail. Said he was crazy



"He said he was crazy for power"

for power, and that the way to get it was to secure control of all the money in the United States. With that he could do anything — overthrow the government, make himself emperor, correct all the abuses in the world. He promised me my generalship, when the time came. Funny jumble of stuff, but sometimes it sounded reasonable, too.”

Old Henry Galleon whistled softly to himself, a homely tune of long ago, and tapped the pile of money with his lead-pencil. “He’s got hold of so much of the money he was after that he’ll forget the rest of the program,” he sagely observed.

CHAPTER II

TWO LADIES ADDRESS NOTES TO THE YOUNG MAN OF READY CASH

FOUR other brokerage firms young Kelvin visited, and with each one he concluded an arrangement precisely like that entered into with Galleon, except that at each office he left a different list of stocks to be sold on a twenty point margin, backed up by fifty dollars cash per share; then, with Sam's suit-case half empty, he directed his chauffeur to drive back up Broadway to the Esplanade. Upon that marvelous thoroughfare he looked about him with the frank curiosity which marks the wondering stranger. He was a part of a swiftly moving triple procession on the right-hand side of the street, a conglomeration of trolley-cars and power-driven vehicles of every description; and upon the opposite side a similar procession flashed by him in endless array, each car at the service of a restless, dominating human force. These were the kings of the world, these men in auto-conveyances, each king struggling, with all his vital power, to conquer other kingdoms. It was

wonderful, this mighty spectacle of realized and realizing ambition, and Phillip drank in the spirit of it with an exhilaration that was almost an intoxication.

"Only fifteen years, Sam," he said, turning to the negro, "and see what has been done. This is the most wonderful city in the world."

"Yes, sah," replied Sam, looking briefly from the suit-case between his feet, and immediately concentrating his gaze upon it again.

Kelvin laughed. "Nothing so wonderful to you as that suit-case, is there, Sam?"

"No, sah," agreed Sam, permitting himself a slight grin, which, however, was so fleeting that it scarcely detracted from the serious preoccupation of his face. "Ah done reckon tha's about all the money in the worl'!"

"Not quite," dissented Kelvin with a smile, then turned again to study the changes time had wrought. "It is marvelous," he presently resumed, talking more to himself than to the negro. "When I was here fifteen years ago I could not appreciate what all this meant, but now I know that this street is the concentrated nervous energy of America gone mad in the race for supremacy. I guess you didn't think you'd see anything like this, Sam, when I saved you from the mob in the Tennessee woods?"

Sam shuddered. "'Deed Ah didn't," he ad-

mitted. "Mistah Phillip, Ah'll neveh folget that as long as Ah live. Mah life was plum' gone, boss. Ah suah would been han'led like they done the right man when they-all got 'im, ef yo' hadn't come along in yo' automobile. Mah life belongs to yo', boss. Yo' kin — yo' kin kill me — jes' any time yo' git good an' ready, 'cause Ah done live now three yeahs longeh than mah time."

"They've been fairly happy years for both of us, Sam," said Phillip; "but now we really begin to live." He mused a while longer, then, going back to his original thought, added with a curious smile: "It is strange to me that, with all these advancements in science, business and politics have not advanced one whit, except along the line of their logical ends. The same antiquated methods are used that were in vogue fifty years ago. I guess that, after all, those are the two most conservative institutions in the world. Eh, Sam?"

"Yes, sah," Sam again readily agreed, whereupon Phillip laughed heartily.

Arrived at Phillip's apartments in the Esplanade, Sam hurried into an inner room. Methodically he took cushions from the couch and pillows from the bed, and piled them in a corner; then he sat down against them with the suit-case between his knees, and within five minutes, in loose-limbed ease and

with an unblinking stare, had lapsed into a semi-trance-like condition, which he could maintain for hours. He reminded one of nothing so much as a huge brown bulldog on guard, and it would have gone ill with any living creature that had tried to touch that suit-case.

Meanwhile, Phillip, in the apartment which had been turned into an office for him, entered his record of the day's business on filing-cards and upon a huge diagram sheet, then wrote a long and careful letter, after which he took pencil and paper from a drawer in his desk and delved into numerous books of statistics.

It was nearing three o'clock when a boy brought in two letters. One of them, in a heavy, cream-tinted envelope and slightly fragrant, he opened and read through with a frown. A postscript at the end, however, brought a smile to his face, and he stepped into the adjoining apartment. Sam's eyes were closed, but Phillip had no sooner set foot in the room than he opened them, black and shining and as expressionless as the eyes of a huge turtle. Without moving, he waited for Phillip to address him.

"Lucy hasn't forgotten you, Sam," said Phillip.

Sam's eyes glistened, and a grin pushed the scar out of the way to make room for itself.

"She suttently is the most mischievousset pusson Ah eveli saw in mah life," he exploded, and he ended with a shrill falsetto chuckle.

"Her mistress writes," went on Phillip, glancing at the letter again: "'Lucy is turning pale since your visit to Forest Lakes, and I think she is pining away for Sam. She asked yesterday when he was coming back. When is he?'"

Sam bent over the suit-case, and slapped his legs in a paroxysm of delight. "Ah suttently is a lady-killeh," said he.

Phillip, laughing, returned to his office, and tearing the letter once across, dropped it into the wastebasket with a gesture of almost contempt, then he opened the second letter, one addressed in a girl's hand, but a firm one. This too he read with a frown, but it was one of surprise, and going to the window, he looked out upon the cheerless prospect of endless roofs and tall, angular buildings with an eye which saw far beyond these artificial canyons. Seen thus and in repose, his face was a striking one, striking because of the sternness that sat upon every feature; but that this sternness, and the habitual squaring of his shoulders and tilting of his chin, had nothing to do with the second letter was presently evidenced when, recalling his wandering thoughts, he smiled as he glanced down at it. A ring of the telephone interrupted his musing.

"Mr. Rensselaer?" he repeated into the telephone. "Send him right up."

He turned to his desk and tossed upon it the letter he had been reading, then quickly sorted his index cards and arranged them in their case. There came a knock at the door, and he opened it to let young Rensselaer in.

"You're just in time, Bert," he declared. "What have you to do this evening?"

"Anything or nothing," replied Rensselaer. "At three o'clock all I want to do is to get as far away from the mutton abattoir as possible, and forget all about it until the next morning."

"You're a queer specimen to be engaged in that branch of physical culture," commented Phillip, as his eyes swept over young Rensselaer's stocky build.

"That's the only reason I'm there," Rensselaer declared with a grin. "It's the nearest thing to bronco-busting that I can find," and he laughed out of the sheer joy of living. "But what reckless dissipation have you in mind?"

"I have some friends over in New Jersey that I am more or less obliged to see," replied Phillip, "and I thought you might sacrifice yourself enough to run over with me. I understand it's only an hour and a half if you take the tunnel."

Rensselaer shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, well, if you insist upon the tube I guess I can stand it

as well as you. It can't be denied that it saves a lot of time."

"I don't think that's the whole reason," confessed Phillip, putting on his hat and top-coat. "Frankly, I want to get into the subway; to smell the subway smell, and renew, if I can, the impressions of novelty that I enjoyed in my boyhood. You see, I was only a kid the last time I was here."

"It must have seemed a wonderful place to you then," said Rensselaer. "For myself I'd rather be a cow-puncher than anything I can think of, but my respected auntie can't conceive of one's living anywhere else than in or near Manhattan, and moreover she fears I might contract a *mésalliance* out west, as she still declares my father did."

"That was his one best trick, wasn't it?" inquired Phillip.

"No doubt of it," returned the other. "I'm the first Rensselaer in a hundred years who has been able to bathe without the aid of a valet, and the first one to have blood enough to gush when he was cut; and my mother—well, she was a real woman; gentle, but brave, too; sweetly feminine, but strong and healthy; tactful, but sincere and honest." His voice quavered, and he stopped.

"I wish I might have known her," said Kelvin. "That is a good country to produce real human

beings. I think I gained health and energy enough out there to last me through all my coming campaign."

Rensselaer turned to him quickly. "Of course I'm not going to ask you what your plans are, nor how you reached your present point," he observed, "but you're doing a stunning thing, if it's your aim to gain profitable conspicuousness. There hasn't been so much real money in the financial district in years. Big checks are not uncommon, but big wads of cold cash are a rarity. I had the pleasure of making your trades this morning, and within an hour afterward they were all talking about it. You certainly must have put in a remarkable five years. Where did you go from Montana?"

"Oh, down to Tennessee in the real-estate business," said Phillip guardedly. "There are large natural resources in that state which are just being developed, and I managed to get in pretty good on them. I did a stroke or two down there that brought me some success and some influential friends. Now I am going to make a big play. You know," and though he spoke lightly he frowned darkly, "a certain Wall Street crowd, still in business, broke my father, and he died from it."

"I remember of your telling me something about

that. But be careful you don't overplay your game," warned Rensselaer, whereat Kelvin only smiled, though grimly enough.

They had reached the bottom of the hotel elevator shaft now, and they turned into the subway corridor, a convenience which impressed Kelvin very much.

"It's a bad development," stated Rensselaer, shaking his head. "There is a growing tendency toward these direct entrances, both in business and in tenement districts, and it is bound to produce a race of toilers who will see no sunlight whatever. They will practically be human moles, like that errand-boy yonder,—undersized and undeveloped, physically, mentally, and morally; white and soft and flabby, like putty. They will not be men, they will be worms."

Phillip looked at the boy, a youth of about seventeen years and not much larger than he should have been at twelve, with a feeling of revulsion. "Sometime the worm may turn," he speculated; "and if it does, watch out! When a country loses its middle class it is in a bad way. You can crush out of mankind everything, even hope, with one exception."

"And that is?"

"The capacity to kill."

Rensselaer laughed. "Can you imagine any-

thing more amusing or entertaining than a fight with about fifty of those chaps?"

"I don't see the fun in it," objected Phillip. "Assume yourself, however, merely for the sake of illustration, to be able to cope with fifty of them; when another and another and still another fifty came it might grow a trifle wearisome. I saw a crowd of newsboys in Chicago attack a very brawny man once, and they nearly killed him."

"I've known cow-men to fight over a milder discussion than this," laughed Rensselaer. "I guess we'd better drop it. Do you remember that famous fight between Mutton Harris and Freckles Lane, over the proper way to flop a pancake?"

That started a line of reminiscences which lasted until tunnel and suburban train had brought them to Hampton, where Kelvin consulted the letter he had carried in his pocket, and they searched out the home of Ben White.

CHAPTER III

YOUNG RENSSELAER DISCOVERS ELSIE WHITE'S SECRET, BUT NOT PHILLIP'S

THE Whites were strictly an instalment family. They lived in an instalment house, wore instalment clothing, sat upon instalment furniture, and read instalment books. As Kelvin and Rensselaer turned in at the gate a scowling collector was turning away from the door, in which stood a plump, rosy and altogether wholesome-looking young woman. Seeing the newcomers, she waited, a trifle apprehensively Kelvin thought, but as they approached she recognized Phillip and hurried out to meet him.

"I knew you'd come!" she said with an unmistakable ring of delight in her voice.

"Quite naturally," Phillip assured her as he shook hands with her. "Allow me to introduce Mr. Rensselaer, Miss White."

She shook hands with Rensselaer, a firm clasp which, though it was mere cordiality, left that impressionable young gentleman tingling. She bade

him welcome with the same unaffected heartiness, and then turned immediately to Phillip.

"How lucky I am!" she said eagerly as they walked up the steps. "When I read your name in the Sunday list of hotel arrivals I just felt sure that it must be our Phillip Kelvin, and I told father that I was bound to write to you and invite you to come out."

"I wondered how you found me so readily," he commented, smiling.

"It's because I'm so lonesome," she replied. "We don't make friends here like we did in Tennessee. I don't know why people seem so distant, unless they are all so busy that they don't seem to have time to become friends; so I am for ever and ever reading the hotel arrivals, hoping that among the names I'll find somebody we used to know." She paused a moment and laughed at herself. "But I never found one until now," she admitted, "because they don't publish the arrivals at the cheap hotels, and we never knew anybody who was likely to be able to stop at the more expensive ones. That is how I came to be sure it was you."

"I don't see why," objected Phillip. "When you knew me I was as poor as a church-mouse."

"I know; but that was five years ago, and I felt sure that in five years you ought to be stopping at

the Esplanade, or you wouldn't be the Phillip I knew."

"That's a very pretty compliment, Phillip," said Rensselaer.

"This young lady couldn't say any other sort of thing about me if she is like she used to be," replied Phillip, placing his hand affectionately upon her shoulder. Rensselaer thought she colored slightly under the touch. "She was one of my stanchest adherents in those days, long before she was a young lady. How old were you when I left, Elsie?"

"Fifteen," she replied.

"Five years ago," mused Phillip; "now you are twenty."

"And you're thirty-three," she returned. "My, how old we're becoming!"

She led them into the little parlor, which opened directly from the stoop. Its floor was spread with a cheap rug, there were cheap pictures upon the walls, and the room was fitted with furniture of fairly good lines, though oppressed with the riot of inferior carving inseparable from cheap cabinet work. In one corner was a music-rack filled with music, and though that corner was filled with a big chair, it seemed conspicuously bare. To Phillip, who knew the Whites so well, that space told its

own story. The payments on the instalment piano had not been kept up!

Elsie saw him looking toward the bereft corner and understood at once how much he knew. She reddened under it, and, partly to hide her confusion, went to the door and called back across the dining-room to the kitchen,

“Mr. Kelvin is here, mother.”

A very much faded-looking woman of forty-two or three came in, drying the backs of her hands with her palms. Her shoulders were stooped, her face was wrinkled and flabby, her hair was untidy, and about every line of her face there was an attitude of whining dejection. Nevertheless she was unaffectedly pleased to find Kelvin there.

“I’m mighty glad to see you,” she said, shaking hands with him, and her tired eyes grew a trifle brighter. “My, how solid looking you’ve grown! Seems to me you look as if you was hunting for somebody to contrary you. You didn’t use to look that way when you boarded with us, did he, Elsie?”

The girl studied him contemplatively, but she found no flaw in him, as Rensselaer, looking at her, saw. He turned curiously, seeking Kelvin’s expression. Kelvin turned to Elsie, and in his gaze Rensselaer thought that he read friendly admiration and nothing more. His look had not that rapt

eagerness of her gaze, and never would have for any woman, Rensselaer found himself deciding. He decided wrongly. Kelvin had found himself strongly drawn to Elsie, but he sternly suppressed that tendency as quickly as he recognized it in himself.

"I don't know," replied Elsie to her mother's question. "There seems to be some slight change, but to me he is just the same old Phillip, whom I'm glad to see again, and hope to see often."

"I suppose you're married by this time?" suggested Mrs. White.

"I have never stayed in one place long enough to get married, except in Tennessee, and there I was too busy," laughed Phillip.

"Elsie never has forgot you," Mrs. White next observed. "She thinks about you all the time, and she's been talking about you ever since we moved away."

The connection of Mrs. White's remarks was so absurdly palpable that Rensselaer could not help letting his eyes twinkle, and Elsie, catching his glance of amusement, laughed outright, whereupon the two callers joined her, very much to Mrs. White's surprise.

"You was a mighty busy young man, even in that six months before we moved away," rattled on Mrs. White. "We was all sorry we had to go

and leave you behind, and it nigh broke Elsie's heart. But she's kep' track of you all right. She made us take a paper from back home on purpose. First we saw that you struck oil on that cheap little two acres of ground you scraped together and bought, then you bought some coal-land and built a foundry and a railroad or what not. I don't know what all you done, but Elsie can tell you every bit of it, from A to Izzard. She's —"

"Mother, did you call father?" interrupted Elsie demurely.

"Yes, he'll be right in. He's out in the garden pottering around. You know he always was crazy about gardening, and he ain't working now. Times seem to be slackening up a bit," and a worried look came across her face. Kelvin, catching it, began to talk of other matters.

"How are the rest of the family?" he asked.

Both Elsie and her mother looked concerned.

"Grace is married," said Mrs. White, and, somehow, from her tone he felt that Grace, Elsie's elder sister, was not happily married. "Ed got his spine hurt in a football game, and he's up-stairs now. You must see him before you go. He always liked you so well. All three of the children did, for that matter, although none of them put a crown and a royal robe on you like Elsie did. Yes, you did, Elsie, you know you did, and you never would

give any encouragement to a beau, from that day to this. I'm afraid Ed's going to be an invalid all his life."

"Oh, that must be seen to!" protested Phillip, shocked in spite of his embarrassment. "Perhaps a specialist could bring him out all right."

Mrs. White shrugged her shoulders despairingly. "Specialists cost money, and we ain't got it — not these times."

Mr. White came in, a man of about forty-five and somewhat overweight. He was a plastering contractor in a small way, and although he had done no work for a month he bore the marks of his trade upon every garment; even his hair and his mutton-chop whiskers seemed rather to have been mortar-bleached than to have grown naturally gray.

"Hello, Phillip!" said he, shaking hands. "So you were our Kelvin, after all. I didn't think that anybody poor enough to know us could become plutocratic enough to stop at the Esplanade, in these times."

"I don't know why not," returned Phillip. "It seems to me that these times offer as many, if not more, opportunities than ever to acquire wealth. It is perhaps true, however, that nowadays if a man has the fighting ability to get a start at all, he has energy to go on up; for the big fight is in getting

out of the rut. That explains, perhaps, why we have practically no middle class left to us. We have only the abnormally rich; the people who spend all their money to live like the abnormally rich, and the very poor."

"Something has to be done!" suddenly exploded Mr. White, bringing down his right fist upon the arm of his chair. Phillip had touched upon his favorite excuse for oratory. "The rich are growing richer, and the poor are growing poorer, every year."

Both Kelvin and Rensselaer smiled in recognition of that ancient "bromide."

"Conditions must be changed entirely," went on White, bringing down both fists. "There never was any monarchy in the world, where the condition of the laboring classes was worse than to-day, nor where the power of money was so unlimited. Look at Henry Breed! That one man alone owns an enormous share of all the property in this country, and the United States government is not strong enough to collect from him that twenty-nine-million-dollar fine. It has been held up in the courts for fifteen years. Some day this country will start aflame, and will burn and destroy itself, to the horror of the world."

Dinner-time came, and still Ben White raved on. Kelvin, catching here and there traces of a rather

close pinch in money matters, had not wanted to stay to dinner, but he saw that he would hurt them if he refused. Before dinner he went up to see the bedridden Ed, a youth of about seventeen, and he came down from that interview rather sober.

At the table, fortunately for the visitors, White had another topic of conversation, his gardening. It was just in the height of the vegetable season, and White was very proud of his radishes, his onions, his string-beans, his peas, his green corn; and really they were very fine. He occupied nearly half the dinner-hour in talking of these things, and then some chance remark led him back to his favorite topic — the crimes of the plutocrats against the proletariat — and he began to accuse Phillip, as a wealthy man, for his share in the existing injustice. It was in vain for Phillip to aver that he had not reached the plutocratic stage by any means, though he was perfectly willing to do so. Ben White, having the idea once settled in his mind, could not be changed.

Phillip found opportunity, before they left, for a few minutes with Elsie. He was allowing himself at least to feel toward her much as an elder brother might, and was bluntly frank with her. "Things are not going right in a business way?" he ventured.

"No," she replied. "Phillip, I knew that you

couldn't help but see it. Father seems entirely to have lost his ambition. Ed is an invalid, and will be. I have never been fitted for anything, but I must go to work. I must; there is no way out of it. Tell me what I should do."

It was one of those questions to which all men of affairs are compelled to listen, but to which they know no answer.

"It's a hard problem, Elsie, to find niches in this busy world for people with no especial training," he told her. "Stenographers earn good pay, if they are competent and intelligent, but it takes half a year to learn, and even then the advancement in wages is very slow."

"I know," she replied. "I've been all over that ground a score of times. Clerking brings no adequate returns. I have about made up my mind what to do. I shall apply for a position as a lady's maid somewhere. I'd be green even at that, but I am intelligent enough to learn."

Phillip shrugged his shoulders. "I'm afraid you wouldn't like it very well. It's a very hard position. Unfortunately, many ladies who are able to employ maids haven't very good tempers at home."

"What else is there to do?" she demanded.

"I don't know," said Phillip. "I rather think, however, that the best way for me to help you would be to secure something for your father."

"He's difficult to manage. He has been very unfortunate."

She was so emphatic as she said this, and looked so straight into his eyes, that he could not speak the answer which was on his tongue—that Ben White was a man of weak purpose, and an atrociously poor manager.

"Nevertheless, I think I can place him," he said.

"If you only could!" she replied. "We would all be so grateful."

Her eyes spoke her gratitude as she looked up at him, and they spoke of something else; at least so Rensselaer judged as he came upon them.

On their way home, Rensselaer, who had resumed his ranch bluntness in the presence of a ranch friend, spoke of the girl. "Miss White is a beautiful young woman, beautiful in mind as well as in face and figure," he declared.

"She has developed remarkably," admitted Kelvin. "She was a little girl in shoe-top dresses when I boarded at their house. Even then I thought her pretty, but I never suspected that she would become such a beautiful woman."

"She is so much more than beautiful," insisted Rensselaer. "She is the sort of woman who would spend her whole life in the endeavor to make her husband happy, and she would succeed. I would swear that she is of even temper and unfaltering

steadfastness; moreover, she is intelligent enough to keep pace with her husband, no matter what his progress."

"She is a fine girl," admitted Kelvin, pleased that Rensselaer should have been so favorably impressed with his friend. "Isn't it startling, though, to think how much her mother must have looked like her at the same age?"

"No," stoutly maintained Rensselaer. "Her mother is only a pitiful example of what worry and hard work and damnable poverty will do for a woman. In happier circumstances, at from forty to forty-five she would still have been a handsome woman, one who would be a living guaranty of her daughter's continued beauty."

"I'll think it over," said Phillip mockingly. "Already I feel myself impressed."

"You are very lukewarm about it!" charged Rensselaer. "Don't you realize, Kelvin, that the girl has made a demigod of you ever since she was a child, and that to-day her impression was only strengthened? Right now she would marry you in a minute, and you would insure yourself a life of happiness."

"You have rather a romantic imagination, Bert," laughed Phillip, with that laugh concealing his true attitude in the matter, whereupon Rensselaer gave up the topic with disgust.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH "THE CASH BEAR" EXPLAINS WHY
THERE IS NO MONEY IN THE UNITED STATES

IT did not take long for the Street to know that there was a new "bear" influence at work. When, on the first morning, some twenty stocks were sold in one-thousand-share lots, no attention was paid. When, however, on the second and third and fourth mornings the day's business was opened by the offer of one thousand shares of each of these stocks, the coincidence began to be noticed, and when the same phenomenon occurred on the fifth and sixth and seventh mornings, it began to be not a coincidence, but a design, and all the floor was talking of it.

The stocks had been disposed of without difficulty, though there was no particular eagerness, for the market was worse than sluggish. Now, however, a certain "bull" coterie of the railroad crowd, scenting here a deliberate attempt to force the market, combined in a more or less aggressive counter-attack, and within another week did actually

succeed in forcing up the entire line some ten points. This action, however, had no effect upon Phillip Kelvin. Every morning, attended by big Sam and the inevitable suit-case, he made the round of his five chosen brokers to dispose of his solid cash, and every morning those five brokers sent their gladiators upon the floor of the Stock Exchange to sell the monotonous one thousand shares of each of the twenty stocks which had been chosen for attack. On the day that the bull movement had forced stocks the highest, Galleon remonstrated with him.

"Look here, Mr. Kelvin," said he; "you are bucking up against some of the biggest men on the Street, a group of half a dozen men, each of whom could probably swallow you whole in a financial way. If they get after your scalp I'm afraid you are in for losing a tremendous amount of money."

"You have everything margined fifty points?"

"Yes. But I have known this same group to manipulate the market to a seventy-point rise."

Young Kelvin was quite complacent about it. "They are doing me a service," said he. "The margins I have put up on the stocks previously bought are ample. They are not going to force prices far enough to make you call for more margin, but if they do the margin will be forthcoming."

In the meantime, however, they are enabling me to sell at a much higher price. They are playing my own game for me."

"I presume you know your own business," returned Galleon dryly; "but remember that I have warned you."

"And remember that I have warned you!" retorted Kelvin. "Be sure you keep my cash in a safe place, and do not entrust it to a bank. In normal times a bank is a safer place than a hole in the ground for money, but not in these times."

Galleon glanced at the financial journal upon his desk, and took off his eye-glasses to wipe them. "Except for the one trifle that currency is a little tight, I see no cloud on the horizon," he observed.

"I am a better financial weather-prophet, for this one time, than the *Wall Street Journal*," declared Phillip confidently. "In a very few days I will show you a cloud that will cover this entire district like a blanket of midnight. I know something, I tell you."

Galleon listened incredulously, but he nevertheless took Kelvin's order and telephoned Rensselaer on 'Change to sell the usual thousand shares each of the four stocks on which he was working.

This was the fourth or fifth time since he had first come into the office that young Kelvin had ventured such dire predictions, and in spite of the

fact that, except for the growing scarcity of actual currency, there was no hint or trace of trouble to come, Henry Galleon began to be a trifle impressed by them, so much so that he began speaking of the matter to others of his kind. In the offices of Raleigh and Raleigh, of Wilde and Company, of Booker and Watson, and of R. F. Eldridge, the other brokerage concerns who were acting as Kelvin's agents, Phillip dropped the same seed, and from these five centers, aided by Rensselaer, there gradually radiated a note of inquiry. Was the market in a really healthy condition? Was the era of stability on the wane? Was there an impending break? No one could tell.

In the meantime Kelvin steadily sold his twenty stocks in one-thousand-share lots. With his peculiar methods he could not remain long incognito. He became known as the "Cash Bear," and there were a dozen conflicting stories as to how he had got his money.

Young Eldridge took a great fancy to him, and before he had been on the market a week had him in at Sherry's for dinner with a lot of the big guns of the market. It was discovered that Kelvin distinctly knew how to comport himself in any company. He said very little about business. He told a clean story or two, quite effectively, but the only thing of note he said during that dinner was

that he confidently looked, very shortly, for the biggest crash in the history of the Street. They heard this remark in amused silence, but in the main they liked him. Rollins, one of the conservatives of the railroad group, and of vast experience, was the only one who studied Kelvin seriously, but then Rollins himself was serious at all times.

"On what do you base that queer prophecy?" he wanted to know.

"I'm not ready to tell you just yet," returned Phillip, smiling, "but it is coming."

"I know why," put in Pellman, one of the more reckless operators of the railroad group. "It's because our young friend is on the short side of the market for all the real cash in the country. There must come a panic. He's like the boy who simply had to find a groundhog in the empty hole, because his family was out of meat."

They were quite content to laugh at Kelvin. He was necessarily "green," being young and new to the Street; but it was generally conceded that his resources were remarkable, and they had respect for his resources if not for himself. Rollins, however, got Phillip to one side after the dinner.

"I'm very curious about the slump you predict," he said. "I hope it's true. I want to buy some railroad stock, and it can't go any too low to suit me."

Phillip looked at him in musing silence. He liked Rollins, a clean, well-set-up man, with a clean life and an honest one written all over him.

"You buy outright only, I believe, Mr. Rollins," he observed.

"Outright only," replied Rollins.

"Then wait. There will be some bargains by and by," declared Phillip, so seriously that Rollins was impressed.

Kelvin had been in the market more than a month, steadily selling all that time, when one evening, in a private dining-room at Sherry's, with almost the same crowd, Rollins found that he had no cash, and sent down a check to the manager, with a request that he send up the currency. The manager himself came up with the check in hand, and very much worried.

"Very sorry, Mr. Rollins," said he, "but I have not the currency in the house. We have had no currency to speak of for several days. I don't know why it is, but there seems to be a tremendous scarcity of cash."

"No matter," returned Rollins with a slight frown, tearing up the check. "I will get it elsewhere."

"Really I am sorry, sir," persisted the manager. "I would offer to send out and get it for you, but I have tried twice to-day, and there is no currency

to be had. I will send up to the Night and Day Bank for you."

"Never mind, I'm going that way myself. What seems to be the matter?"

"I don't know, sir," responded the manager. "Trade was never better. Our regular customers seem to have plenty of money, but no currency. There used to be a certain portion of our customers who invariably paid in cash; now even these merely sign the dinner-slips and pay by check. I don't believe I have seen a thousand dollars in cash in a week, except what I drew myself for our pay-roll here."

"That seems to be a general complaint," remarked Pellman, after the manager had left the room. "There is a scarcity of money everywhere. Yesterday my check was refused at two hotels. I don't understand it."

"I can tell you," said Kelvin quietly. "Within the past year nearly a billion dollars of actual currency have been entirely withdrawn from circulation."

They were slow to understand how this could be.

"I have seen no mention of such a withdrawal," urged Pellman. "I don't believe there is a man on the Street who follows the fluctuations of currency any closer than I do. Where and how has this amount of money disappeared?"

"In bread," declared Kelvin. "The one commodity in this country which must invariably be paid for in cash is the five-cent loaf of bread."

A short laugh ran around the board.

"I don't see where that could amount to a billion of actual currency," remonstrated Ralph Eldridge.

"No?" replied Kelvin. "I will show you. Twelve months ago Henry Breed quietly issued from his central organization, the United Food Company of New Jersey, a general order that all bread and cereal foodstuffs must be sold for spot cash only. The receipts from these sales were not to be deposited in banks, but were to be shipped in currency to the general offices of his company. Do you know what this meant? Breed began as an obscure miller. He formed combination after combination of flouring-mills until, twenty years after he started that task, he practically owned every grist-mill and every grain-elevator in the United States, accomplishing that through an elaborate system of rebating on wheat and flour shipments. Every farmer who raised wheat, raised it to sell to Henry Breed at prices set by Breed, for there was no other buyer. His next step was to establish the immense bakery system which now bears his name. Flour was set at such a price that families could not afford to buy it, and that opposing bakeries were

forced out of business. Now, in all the centers of population, he has his immense mechanical bread-furnaces, from which his bread-trains rush before daylight to distributing-stations in all the small towns, while his remarkable automobile service supplies the cities. By concentration of manufacture he claims to have been of actual benefit to the country, furnishing a better grade of bread at a lower price than was ever known before, and making more profit on it than individual bakeries ever did."

"That's all an old story," said Pellman impatiently. "He is a wonderful man, but I don't see yet what that has to do with the scarcity of cash."

"It has just this much to do with it," Kelvin went on, standing up to gain impressiveness. "Breed pays everything by check, hypothecating some of his immense stock holdings and thus turning them into cash. He supplies nearly ninety million people with every ounce of bread they eat, with every spoonful of cereal food upon every breakfast-table in the United States, with every particle of pastry served in this broad land of ours. Think for one moment. Through this monopoly of all cereal foodstuffs, every one of ninety million people pays a tribute to him of, on the average, about three cents a day, which amounts daily to over two and a half million dollars, or in the past year to nearly a billion dollars. Actual cash, gentlemen,

nearly a billion of actual currency gone from our already limited circulation!"

One-half of them had out their pencils and were figuring upon the backs of cards and envelopes; the other half were looking over their shoulders. In the face of every man was the intense frown of concentration.

"Nine hundred and ninety-five and a half million, to be more exact," corrected Pellman. "We still have nearly two and a half billion with which to transact business, however."

"You are making an error when you estimate upon our approximate three and a half billions of cash. You are not deducting the government cash reserves in the United States treasury and sub-treasuries. You are not deducting our billion and a half of gold which practically never sees the light of day, nor emerges from its sealed canvas bags in the bank vaults. You are not deducting the currency reserves in the approximate seven thousand National Banks in this country. You are not deducting the reserves in private banks, nor the immense number of small private hoardings. The per-capita circulation of money in this country is estimated at thirty-five dollars. In reality, allowing for these reserves, the actual amount is probably but a little over fifteen dollars per-capita, of actual, circulating, hand-to-hand cash. *Of this, over*

ten dollars per-capita is now in the possession of Henry Breed, and this money has seeped away so insidiously that not one of you shrewd financiers, who make a knowledge of the ebb and flow of money your business, has been aware of it. Gentlemen, it is nearly all gone now, and soon there will be no money whatever in the United States!"

They went away from that dinner very quietly, and each man put carefully into his pocket the envelope or card upon which he had been figuring.

That night, in clubs and exclusive hotels, even in private homes, there was much quiet selling of stock, and the Atlantic cable was busy with selling orders for the London Exchange. There had been eight of the mighty kings of finance at that dinner, either in person or by their near representatives!

Rollins had walked away with Kelvin.

"This is a marvelous thing you have been telling us," said he; "but an incendiary thing, too. The strange part is that it should have remained for you alone to discover it, and to profit by it. How did you find it out?"

"Well, with ten thousand distributing agents, each one instructed to remit in currency only, it would be very strange if there were not a leak, even though every agent was cautioned, as he was, on pain of dismissal, not to reveal it. Doubtless a host of people other than myself know of it, but

the individual amounts were so small that no one paid any attention."

"That's precisely it," insisted Rollins. "It remained for you to appreciate and take advantage of the enormous possibilities of the thing; to understand its magnitude in the aggregate. You are a great man, Mr. Kelvin. You have been selling all the time, haven't you?"

"Every morning," admitted Phillip, smiling.

"You must have an enormous account by this time."

"Close to seven hundred thousand shares," confessed Phillip.

"And you held back your explanation of all this until you had acquired all you wanted? I thought so. Well, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. I want some railroad shares. I see now that your advice was sound; I'll wait until it goes down to bargain prices; but I suppose you realize what a calamity you are going to bring on the country?"

"I think I do," and Phillip's jaws closed with a snap.

Rollins looked at him in slightly disapproving speculation.

"Gad!" he said. "Some of the big men here have been pirates, but you will be the most ruthless wrecker who ever got into Wall Street."

"No," returned Phillip with a curious smile. "You have read me wrong. I am not a pirate; I am a reformer."

"I see," concluded Rollins; "in the same manner that the Inquisition reformed the heretics."

"I decline to be interviewed," declared Phillip. "Are you going up-town?"

At the Esplanade Kelvin found Rensselaer.

"Have you been waiting long, Bert?" he asked.

"Not very," yawned Rensselaer, "except that I'm eaten alive with curiosity. It isn't like you to insist that I should break an engagement in order to see you immediately after dinner."

"I'm very sorry, but I had to impose upon you," said Phillip. "You are the only chap on my list who knows a lot of the newspaper crowd. I have an item for them, and I don't want to give it out myself."

He told Rensselaer what had transpired at the dinner. Rensselaer clapped him on the back and laughed long and loud.

"The newspapers will eat that story!" he declared. "It's a wonderful thing! Great Scott, man, how many shares are you short?"

"About seven hundred thousand."

"Then every point drop means seven hundred thousand dollars to you. This will send the line

down thirty points. Let me figure a minute. Why, that's twenty-one million dollars!"

"I figure on a little bit more than that," returned Kelvin dryly; "but don't let that distress you any, Bert."

"You might have given a fellow a tip," complained Rensselaer.

"The time was never ripe for a man to speculate on small margin," said Phillip. "A concerted bull movement might have forced the market up ten or fifteen points at any time. Not now, however. How much money have you?"

"A little over two thousand dollars of my own," replied Rensselaer, "but I can get hold of ten thousand more."

"Do you know any way that you can place your twelve thousand on the London market in the morning?"

"I think I can."

"Get it down then as quickly as possible. I don't want the newspaper men to have this before midnight, but they should have it by then. That will give you plenty of time to place your little ten-point bet."

"Me for it!" said Rensselaer, jumping up. "Watch me make the sidewalk smoke." At the door, however, he paused. "And just to think," he

said, "that all this glittering opportunity comes about through old Henry Breed. Why, I have an aunt out at Forest Lakes, a guest of Breed's, she calls herself; but she's a guest for pay, and is a sort of bear leader for the fair Lillian. She would be above taking money for coaching Lillian, and afterward inducting her into society, but she's not above letting Breed 'handle her investments' of a paltry ten thousand dollars on a guaranteed return of one hundred per cent."

"If you want to get those selling orders away you had better hurry," suggested Kelvin, looking at his watch. "I have an idea that the cables will be loaded with just such messages before morning."

Shortly after midnight, Kelvin, who had laid down in his clothes, was awakened by the ringing of his telephone bell, and from then on until morning he was kept busy answering calls from the various newspaper offices. He gave them all the information he could. They besieged him for news, for photographs, for the story of his life, for his views on everything from agnosticism to tomato-culture, and in the morning, having given out all the information he had at hand, he was compelled to go to another hotel incognito to escape the reporters. He had brought to him all the morning papers, and read with smiles the mass of naïve exaggerations. He was the shrewdest man

that had ever come into Wall Street; he was a combination of all the great financiers in America, from Vanderbilt to Harriman; he had sold short anywhere from one to ten million shares of stock; his age ranged from sixteen to sixty, his complexion from blond to brunette, and his character from a humming-bird's to a vampire's. About only two things was there no disagreement: he had conducted his commendable transactions with real money, and Henry Breed, whose greed had made this possible, was the most profound scoundrel of the century!

While he was still reading these accounts, the Stock Exchange opened, and it opened with a rush, with practically every trader on the floor wanting to sell, and few wanting to buy. Within five minutes of the opening the place was a pandemonium, and he had to be a Hercules who held buying orders. The peculiar part of the movement was that it started simultaneously in nearly every trading group upon the floor. Men with orders to sell five thousand shares of U. P. would no sooner execute that commission than they would plunge into the Steel Common group with equal frenzy. The floor of the Stock Exchange began to be littered with little scraps of white paper, torn in sheer nervousness, until, as the excitement increased, there was scarcely any of the floor visible. The telephone

call-board was a solid block of white numbers, with here and there a twinkling black space as the call was answered. Athletic "floor-partners," carefully selected for the rare combination of physical prowess and nimble wit, would plunge, red-faced, fighting with shoulders and elbows and hands, through equally excited groups of forty or fifty, and in the madness of the moment would grasp an unfortunate buying clerk by the cravat to chain his attention and secure the nod that meant a consummated deal. Men with orders to wait for a price bellowed in sheer nervousness. It was a roaring, shrieking, cursing hell, in which clothing was rent, and men, either white-faced or purple-faced, according to their temperaments, fought like ferocious dogs for a mere glance from a man who had buying orders.

By three o'clock every security listed on the Stock Exchange had dropped twenty points a share. Many of them had gone still lower. That afternoon the private dining-rooms of all the exclusive cafés were filled with grave men, certain groups planning to go with the movement, and others, more far-seeing, devising ways and means to stem the oncoming tide.

Pellman himself took a train to Forest Lakes, the country home of Henry Breed. The six biggest railroad operators in the Street had met with

Pellman, and had decided that if any man could influence Breed, Pellman was the man. Pellman himself was dubious. He had once angered Breed, but, for that matter, Breed had engaged in some quarrel or other with every man in the market.

CHAPTER V

THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD IS IN NO CONDITION TO TALK BUSINESS

PELLMAN approached Forest Lakes with a confidence that diminished as he came in sight of the forbidding gray stone wall which surrounded Breed's immense estate. For nearly a mile this wall hemmed in one side of the country road; beyond that barrier the estate was heavily wooded, and where the wall dipped across little valleys, Pellman peered over the top of it with much curiosity. He caught the glint of water amid the trees; he saw a deer stalking calmly across a glade. Pellman, while he had frequently been a guest at Breed's other houses, had never been at Forest Lakes, nor had any of his friends. This was Breed's retreat from the world, where none but the family and servants ever penetrated.

At the great iron gates a grizzled old woodsman with a gun took Pellman's card through the grille, and stepping inside a small lodge telephoned to the house. He came out again in a few moments.

"Mr. Breed is ill," he said. "The doctor has forbidden him to see any one."

"Is the doctor in the house?" asked Pellman.

"Yes, sir. It is Mr. Breed's own doctor. He lives here."

Pellman proffered a bill. "Telephone the doctor that I would like to see him."

"All right, sir," said the gate-keeper, and turned slowly away, but he did not touch the money. He was gone about five minutes. "Doctor Zelphan says that you may come up to the house," he announced upon his return.

Pellman frowned as the big gates swung open, admitting his limousine; he frowned still more when the chauffeur was stopped just inside the gates, while three other bronzed and grizzled woodsmen, each with a gun, trudged down along the inside of the wall and stared into his car, fixing his features firmly in their memories.

At the door an almost decrepit servant, not in livery, ushered him into a dim old parlor, where rusty horsehair furniture bulged and crinkled with the everlasting dampness. There was a rustle of silk in the hall, and a girl of about twenty stopped for a moment in the door. She was of unusual beauty, dark haired and dark eyed, with a certain quick, lithe movement that told of nervous energy

gone riot for want of outlet. Her face was an elongated oval with an olive under-tint, and cheeks and lips were of a dark redness that told of over-much blood. For just a moment she stood, a startling figure in her semi-fitted house-gown of wood-brown silk, then she moved swiftly away, and her place in the doorway was taken by Doctor Zelphan, an inordinately squat and heavy-set man, whose face, except for his eyes and knob of a nose, was entirely concealed by a stiff bush of red beard. Upon his eyes were glasses of extraordinary thickness, but behind the lenses they nevertheless shone shrewdly.

"Doctor Zelphan?" asked Pellman, rising.

"I am, sir," replied the other with a bare trace of foreign accent. "You wish to see Mr. Breed." It was not a question; it was a mere statement.

"On a matter of the greatest importance."

"Impossible," declared the doctor. "It is not only my orders, but his own, that no one be admitted on any exciting errand."

He stood uncompromisingly against the door, and the visitor judged that the door on the opposite side of the hall led to Breed's apartments. Pellman considered a few moments in silence.

"Is he able to talk at all?" he asked.

"Yes," admitted the other, and for a fleeting

instant Pellman thought that he had detected a twinkle in Zelphan's eye.

"Then I *must* see him," insisted Pellman. "We are in the throes of a national calamity!"

He held out to Zelphan a copy of an afternoon paper, aflame with the terror of the withdrawal of currency from circulation, with the panic of the morning, with dire prophecy for the future. A certain rearrangement of Zelphan's beard showed that he smiled as he read.

"Mr. Breed is in no fit condition to talk over such matters," said the doctor, giving back the paper with aggravating indifference.

"He *must* be in condition," insisted Pellman, who was a tall, raw-boned fellow with jaws like a vise, and with broad nostrils from which, when under excitement, he breathed like a wind-blown horse. "Mr. Breed alone could stop this."

Zelphan turned suddenly and strode to the door across the hall. "Come in," he invited.

Pellman followed him into a great, dim library, where, though the time was late in spring and the sun-dried air outside was uncomfortably warm, a huge wood-fire was burning, casting its fitful red glow into the farthest corners of the dark room. Near the window, but facing the fire, sat the remarkable man who, by his ingenuity and enterprise,

had built up the most enormous business in the world, and who, through it, had gained control of not less than one-thirtieth of the capitalized industries of the United States. He proved to be tremendously tall, in spite of his slightly stooped shoulders, when he rose to meet Pellman. His head was entirely bald and of an ugly shape, all flat spaces and sharp angles. He breathed Pellman's name, and gave him a limp, fish-cold hand, then sank back to his seat and looked indifferently at the fire again.

"I suppose you have heard, Breed," began Pellman, "that a panic has broken loose to-day?"

Breed shook his head. "No, I had not," said he with entire unconcern.

"It has. To-day is but the mild beginning of it, but we fellows who have been through it know precisely what is to follow. By to-morrow the country will be crazy, and there is no telling where the ruin will end."

Breed looked into the fire and merely nodded.

"The entire board has gone down twenty points or more to-day. From the temper of the Street I look for all stocks to make a new low record."

Breed nodded at the fire. Pellman began to breathe hard, a sign that his temper was rising. He had been unable to arouse the slightest trace of interest in Breed.

"Cereal stocks have suffered more than any of

them!" He had saved this shot. The cereal stocks had originated with Breed himself; they were a part of him, they represented his life's work, and were quoted strong, always. To Pellman's intense disgust Breed only looked into the fire, and nodded as one who had heard a pleasing tale.

"Look here, Breed," exclaimed Pellman, "you are going to ruin all the business interests in the country. You are going to break banks, stop factories, and cause untold misery, even starvation — wholesale starvation, worse than this country has ever known! What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," quavered Breed. "It is none of my affair."

Pellman would have liked to shake him. He looked at the man in silence, and while his sharp nose and his thin lips and his pointed chin were outlined crisply against the window, edged with a line of carmine from the red firelight, a queer thought came to Pellman, that there in that unlovely sphere of bone lay a few ounces of brain that had built up the most colossal fortune in the world; that held subject to its whim the destinies, not only of the ten million human beings directly or indirectly employed by him, but now, in this extremity, the destinies of ninety millions of people! Pellman was far-seeing. If this calamity could not be nipped in the bud it was likely to be felt all over the world.

And one man could do it, could, this very day, make or mar fortunes, promote or destroy commerce, prolong or end lives. And one man could do it! It was too much power. Wherein did the gray matter in Henry Breed's head differ from that of all other men? Where was the secret of his tremendous force, his tremendous capacity to achieve? Pellman was startled out of this idle speculation by a senile chuckle. Henry Breed, looking into the fire, was laughing in a high-pitched falsetto, and nodding his glistening old head.

"Breed!" commanded Pellman sharply.

The owner of countless millions looked around at him almost vacantly, but before he could reply, had he been minded to do so, a tall, gaunt man with protruding cheek-bones and bristling red hair and a drooping, sandy mustache came in with a slip of yellow paper in his hand. He glanced at Pellman inquiringly, and a gleam of recognition flashed upon his countenance, although Pellman could have sworn that he had never seen the man before. He caught the man's eye, and its blaze, somehow, gave him an uneasy feeling. He noted that the man's skin was like leather; that his neck, though small, had great cords upon it that swelled and thickened as they spread toward his torso; that his shoulders were broad, and that his great knotted hands told of tremendous power. For only an instant the

man's gaze swept Pellman, then he advanced to Breed.

"A wireless for you, sir," said he, in a voice of so deep a range that it seemed to jar all the air in the room and set it quivering.

Breed glanced at the message, almost indifferently, and handed it back. "Tell him that there is to be no compromise with that firm, Blagg," he directed, dropping his indifference suddenly, then relapsing into it again; and he cast a crafty glance toward Pellman.

The wireless operator smiled grimly and turned away. As he started out the door the young woman Pellman had seen in the hall came in, accompanied by an elder woman. Pellman saw Blagg's eyes flame again as they rested on the girl, and the man turned to look after her to the last as he closed the door.

The elder woman was rather stout, with her head thrown back in a general attitude of contempt, her cheeks flabby, but carefully made up with rouge and powder, her eyes wrinkled, and her retroussé nose uptilted, even to a greater degree than her chin. Pellman remembered her vaguely as a Mrs. Rensselaer, one of the long-since impoverished exclusives of old Manhattan, but still a power in the inner circles, and he idly wondered what she could be doing here. Mrs. Rensselaer, however, had no

curiosity about Pellman, or about any of them, for that matter, casting upon them all a glance of indiscriminating disdain, and, going to one of the bookcases, she sought out a volume and took it away with her. But the girl came and stood behind Breed's chair, her hand resting lightly upon his shoulder, and stared at Pellman with frank impertinence. Her attitude angered him.

"Breed!" he again commanded sharply.

"Well?" asked Breed apathetically.

"You must listen to me," insisted Pellman. "Half a dozen times, under emergency, you have come to the front and helped to smooth things out; once you even saved the government. Now we have a worse condition than any that has ever confronted us. The whole country is going to hell. The Stock Exchange will be swept out of existence before the week's end. There will be more bank failures than have ever occurred in the United States in any one year. I know how these things start, and you know. Breed, you must do something. I am not going away from here until you do. Call off your absurd cash drain, announce it to the public, and go with us to bolster up the market."

Breed looked around him slowly, and his eye caught that of Doctor Zelphan. "Take me away," said he. "I am tired. Lillian!"

Zelphan stepped immediately to his side, took his

arm, and started toward the door on the other side of the fireplace, the girl supporting his other arm.

"Wait!" almost shrieked Pellman. "You are not so ill that you can not talk this matter over. You were well enough just now to put the screws on some concern unlucky enough to be under your thumb! Listen to me!"

Breed only hastened his shuffling footsteps. Pellman strode after them, but just as they reached the door Doctor Zelphan opened it, and the girl cast back at Pellman a glance of derision from her dark eyes. She took Breed into the room beyond, and as the door closed behind her she laughed an insolent laugh of amusement.

Zelphan stood before the door with his feet apart. "I told you just how it would be," he declared. "The man is in no condition to talk business, and must not be bothered again."

Pellman left the house, fuming, and his ill humor was in no degree lessened when, just beyond the gates, his hired car suffered a flat tire. The chauffeur, rather a bungler, was full thirty minutes in repairing it, and as they finally whirled past the first point where the valley allowed a glimpse beyond the wall, Pellman swore viciously as he saw two figures crossing the glade armed with golf-sticks. They were some distance away, but he was sure they were the doctor and Henry Breed!

CHAPTER VI

MR. PELLMAN DISCOVERS THE SOURCE OF PHILLIP KELVIN'S CASH

OVERNIGHT, merely from the impetus of their descent, stocks went down not less than fifteen points. Every newspaper in the United States fairly dripped with sensational stories based upon the fact that there was no money in circulation. The announcement only intensified the situation. Currency had been scarce, but there had been enough to conduct needful operations. Now all currency crept instantly into retirement. Banks guarded their cash reserves with a life-and-death desperation. Men who had been about to pay small bills kept the money in their pockets, and a universal stagnation set in. In another day arrangements were made in a dozen cities to issue clearing-house certificates which were to take the place of money. They were resorting instantly to an expedient that had proved of immense value in half a dozen different crises. In the meantime, pandemonium had foreclosed its long overdue mortgage upon the New York Stock Exchange. Its one

musical note was a shrieking roar, that rose and fell in wailing cadences, and each crescendo was a requiem for some dying firm of brokers. Like the black plague, each corpse caused a dozen more.

Pellman, that day, sat in his office until nearly eleven o'clock, receiving by telephone the reports of the slaughter. Overnight he had seen personal disaster staring over his shoulder and had made desperate attempts to fortify himself. Suddenly, however, he found that he had no friends of influence. Two days before he could have secured almost unlimited backing; to-day no one had money, and there was no such thing in existence as a negotiable security. Only one thing could help him — a restoration of the public confidence and a consequent immediate recovery in the price of stocks; and this only one thing could bring about — an announcement by Breed that no more cash would be withdrawn from circulation, and that some of that already retired would be put back into the active channels of trade. Let Breed give that mere announcement to the papers, authoritatively, and not only Pellman but the whole country would be saved. He hurried over to the New Jersey offices of the United Food Company, first telephoning to make sure that Ashburn, the general manager, was there. He found Ashburn in his private office, watching the ticker ribbon with much inter-

est, but before they had even exchanged greetings he himself hurried to the tape, and read with his own eyes the appalling record of the devastation that had occurred within the last hour. Pellman was a heavy holder of Northern Pacific, and as his eyes glanced over the tape it ticked off the latest quotation on that stock at a price so absurdly low that he fairly shrieked at Ashburn across the white ribbon.

“You people are responsible for this!”

“Pretty clever work,” commented Ashburn, glancing into a mirror and settling his lavender cravat. He was apple-checked and wore curled mustaches, and his tendency to dandyism had always annoyed Pellman. “Three months ago I began selling short, and now I am closing up. The market is bound to go lower, but there will be no chance to get the money when it goes there. Look at this!”

A long sentence was being spelled out on the tape:

Wilson and Woodruff admit bankruptcy.

“It is beginning already,” said Ashburn complacently. He looked up at Pellman. The face of the latter had turned suddenly to a ghastly greenish pallor. “What’s the matter?” Ashburn asked.

“Wilson and Woodruff!” gasped Pellman. “We are bound up with them, owing to some recent

deals, like Siamese twins." Pellman's hands were nervously groping from pocket to pocket. His mouth and throat were working queerly. He seemed incapable of speech. Ashburn understood, and handed him a cigar and lit a match for him. Pellman took a puff or two, and steadied himself with a heavy effort of will-power.

"I was afraid of it," he said huskily, then suddenly flared out again. "You fellows have done this, I tell you!"

"No doubt we precipitated the break at this particular moment," agreed Ashburn; "but you and your kind are responsible for the break itself. It was bound to come, for Wall Street is diseased. This thing will turn out right, Pellman. In the end you will find it to have been good medicine for business at large."

"To hell with business at large!" exclaimed the other, grown vicious in his big rage. "What do I care for business at large if I go bankrupt? When are you going to stop this infernal massacre?"

"I don't know," said Ashburn calmly. "Orders do not come directly from me. They merely go through me."

"They come from Forest Lakes," asserted Pellman.

Ashburn only smiled, and daintily flicked some cigarette-ashes off his sleeve with a handkerchief.

“You’re actually gloating over it!” charged Pellman, white with anger. “The whole thing is a carefully made panic, by which Breed, and you head bakers of his, profit. Well, there are ways to make you do something, and I intend to evoke them.”

Ashburn shrugged his shoulders. “Go ahead and evoke,” he invited. “In the meantime I would like to call your attention to the beautiful little fact that I have personally cleaned up over one million dollars in the past week, and I stand to make another handsome profit if all you manipulators don’t go to pieces before I can collect it.”

Pellman returned again and again to the attack, but finally was compelled to give up in despair. As he walked away, almost blind with rage, he was impeded by two men carrying an iron-bound wooden packing-case, and his eye mechanically noticed that there was a cut in the edge of one of the sheet-iron bands, the point of this cut turning up in an ugly fashion. He swore as he caught himself taking note of such a trivial detail in the midst of his worry, and bent himself sternly to the consideration of his own tangled affairs. Like many another of the larger operators, he had done considerable trading through Henry Galleon and Company and the other four conservatives to whom Kelvin had entrusted his deals, and with each he had a varying

balance. He called up Henry Galleon to find out the status of his affairs there. Mr. Galleon was very cold about it.

"I must have more margin at once to protect your purchases," he declared. "Your balance with me is now less than fifty thousand dollars, and it will be wiped out in an hour unless you send me a check."

"Who is my principal creditor?" asked Pellman.

"Young Kelvin. He has been buying outright all day and demanding absolute delivery of stock. I think it is his intention to force delivery upon all purchasers to whom he has previously sold."

"Where is he to be found?"

"In his apartments at the Esplanade," replied Galleon. "He has a ticker in his rooms, and remains there until the Stock Exchange closes."

Pellman hung up the receiver, and hurried over to the apartments of young Kelvin. He found Philip seated before a huge sheet of figures, checking off certain items from a thick pile of memorandum slips. Seen here, he suddenly looked ageless. Pellman had given him credit only for youth and consequent inexperience. He moistened his lips before he spoke.

"I understand you sold me ten thousand shares of N. P.," he said.

Kelvin consulted a card-index, and nodded his

head. "Yes," he replied. "Through Henry Galleon and Company."

"If you force delivery on that stock," said Pellman, "I can't save breakfast money out of my operations in Galleon's office. I have come to ask of you a big favor. Let me close that deal now; let me give you my note for the difference between selling price and present market price, you to hold the stock as security."

Kelvin listened, and then quietly took from his index case a separate pack of memorandum slips, bound with rubber bands. He went through them carefully, finally pulling out one slip. He studied this a moment and then as carefully replaced it and put the bundle in his drawer.

"Impossible, Mr. Pellman," he announced. "No compromise can be made on this stock. I have just purchased, for spot cash, ten thousand shares of N. P. at sixty-four. You purchased from me at one twenty-eight. You must take the stock at that figure and you can sell it for sixty-four, if you hurry. Or I will keep the stock, and you can pay me the difference *in cash*."

"I can't possibly do it," said Pellman.

"I can't possibly do anything else," replied Phillip dryly, and no amount of persuasion would cause him to recede from that position.

Pellman, desperate to try some other means of

protecting himself, was turning away when two men came into the room with a small wooden packing-case bound with sheet-iron. Pellman might not have noticed this circumstance, but for his recognition of the men. His eye for smaller detail saw a cut upon one of the sheet-iron bands, and an ugly upturned corner. He had passed out of the room before the full significance of this sank in on him, and then he returned angrily to Kelvin.

"Now I understand," he said. "I see how you came to be called the 'Cash Bear.' That box is full of money collected by Breed's company and furnished to you to conduct this campaign. We in the financial field should have known what you were. You are Breed's puppet! I understand, too, why there is no chance to compromise with you. My name is on the list of men that Breed has sworn to break, and he has done it."

Kelvin looked at him calmly. "I can not prevent you from supposing anything you like, Mr. Pellman, but I would like to impress upon you the fact that I am very busy."

"Dangling and dancing upon the strings that Breed pulls!" declared Pellman with hot contempt.

Kelvin smiled aggravatingly. "It seems to me that you too are dangling and dancing upon the strings that Mr. Breed pulls," he charged with cool insolence. "But you might as well calm down, for

since you have been talking to me your firm has been announced as bankrupt."

"It's a lie!" declared Pellman, though he knew in his heart that it was true.

Kelvin pointed to the tape, where the ticker had just finished announcing the suspension of Pellman and Company. "It seems to be true," said Phillip. "Moreover, I don't mind confessing to you that we did it—that, in fact, Mr. Breed intended to do it; and I showed him how."

"You damned—!" shrieked Pellman, white with fury, and advancing a threatening step. A quick, warning signal from Phillip made him turn hastily. In the doorway crouched a figure that would have startled a man with even stronger nerves than Pellman's. The crouching figure was that of big black Sam, his long, gorilla-like arms close to the floor, the huge muscles of his legs tense, his marble-like eyes rolling, his lips drawn back over his teeth in a jackal snarl—and he was creeping slowly forward toward Pellman.

"You'd better leave, Pellman," said Phillip. "You're the man that broke my father."

CHAPTER VII

PHILLIP MAKES A CASH LOAN TO ELSIE WHITE
BUT STOPS THERE.

THE grim joke of it was that Wall Street was being rent by its own Frankenstein. Wall Street was quite used to panics, in fact it had been in the business of making them, but here was one that had been made entirely outside of its calculation, and it did not know what to do with the creature. The ghastly feature of this panic was that the cause of it was going steadily on. Every day, in every city and village throughout the land where Breed had established his thousands of bread-depots, was still that steady drain which had, in the first place, caused the disruption of the financial system. Each depot was a rivulet of nickels and dimes which, uniting in a broad river of dollars, flooded the entire currency of the country to the feet of Henry Breed. And that river could not be dammed. Breed, as a retail merchant, had a perfectly legal right to demand cash for his commodities, and he could not be stopped from collecting it.

On the day that Pellman went under there were

half a dozen other failures, and this was but the beginning of terror-filled days, each with a more and more dismal history. Throughout the country banks were breaking, and business houses were going down with them. Factories were suspending, and chaos reigned everywhere. Every failure made a dozen more, and from coast to coast there swept with incredible swiftness a tidal wave of bankruptcy. It was a hideous object-lesson in business methods. The entire boasted "prosperity" of the country had been built upon nothing more substantial than universal credit, which was, in closer definition, but universal confidence. This destroyed, by a breath credit was destroyed; and a whole nation of people was forced into immediate idleness and want because its machinery for exchanging the product of its labor for the product of other labor had developed a broken cog.

And, as usual, it was the poor that suffered quickest and most. Phillip, on a day especially prolific of new champagne-fed paupers, was surprised to receive a visit from Elsie White. She was pale and nervous; much worry had caused her to lose sleep, and as she stood before Phillip, her hands clasped tightly together, young Rensselaer, who happened to be in Phillip's apartments at the time, was surprised to find how keenly he pitied her. He hurried to place her a chair, but she paid no attention to him

more than to acknowledge his courtesy, and Rensselaer, seeing her big eyes with the dark rings under them fixed appealingly upon Phillip, mumbled an apology and went back to Sam, whom he always found amusing.

"I have come to tell you my troubles as I have always done," said Elsie with a smile that was wan in spite of all her effort to make it cheerful.

"Let's hear all about it," invited Phillip cordially. "I don't think my little sister ever came to me, in the old days, that I didn't help her out of her difficulties, if possible."

"Indeed, no," she said gratefully. "You were the finest sort of big brother."

She lingered a trifle upon that word, unconsciously emphasizing it ever so slightly; and Rensselaer, had he been there, would have noted in it, perhaps, a trace of regretful abnegation. Phillip outwardly accepted the word as a pleasant expression of confidence. Inwardly, he winced at it. The impulse came upon him to repudiate it, but another and a greater passion held him back — the passion of an all-sweeping ambition.

"Who has broken your doll this time?" he asked with a smile.

She shook her head. "It is worse than a broken doll," she said. "When you were in Hampton you spoke about securing employment for father."

Phillip turned grave. "I have thought about it a great many times," he replied; "but outside of his trade he has so little adaptability that I could not think of a place for him."

Again Elsie clasped her hands and plunged heroically into her errand.

"He *must* be put in a position to earn some money. We are really in a desperate condition, Phillip. You know, without being told, how we have always lived from hand to mouth." Even then, in her loyalty, she said "we." "For some time things have been going from bad to worse. Yesterday we received notice that we must give up our home, and we must move out by Saturday. We shall lose our furniture at the same time. Until recently we had credit at the butcher's and the grocer's, but that has been cut off. Grace's husband is wandering about, somewhere out West, penniless and hunting for work, and Grace and her two little children have come home to us, just at a time when we can do nothing for them; yet they are ours, and we must take care of them. Grace is not strong; of the seven of us in the house, only father and I are physically able to earn a living. I have been in the city every day for the past week, hunting for employment, and father has made more persistent efforts than I have ever known him to make, except in his hobby of gardening; but we have not found

anything. The time has come when we *must* find it."

She did not tell him of their actual hunger, of their almost actual starvation, but Phillip, looking at her drawn face and knowing her old-time pride, which she had humbled so simply and unaffectedly before him, could guess, and was shocked. He longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, but he did not.

"Really, Elsie, I didn't know, I couldn't believe, that the case was so desperate," he said with contrition. "First of all, you must let me make your father a loan sufficient to cover all needs; the payments on the house and furniture, the little outstanding bills, enough to cure Ed and to run on. No one outside of the family has a better right than I to do this, and no one would be so glad."

"I know," she returned. "You are very delicate, too, to offer to make the loan to father, but I'd rather you would lend it to me, for I have determined to become the business man of the family."

For the first time her face colored. She felt that even in this there was a hint of disloyalty to her father, but it could not be avoided.

"Just as you like," agreed Phillip. "How much shall you need?"

She handed him a little slip of paper upon which the amounts were already set down and totaled.

The sum was pitifully small in view of all the vast sums which Phillip had at his disposal.

"I don't think it wise for you to confine this to actual necessities," he urged. "It would be much better to take a larger sum; one that would cover all emergencies."

Elsie shook her head firmly. "No," she said. "I have already allowed a small leeway. The less I can make the burden the better I shall feel about it, for it must all be paid back. Please let me have my own way."

"I don't see how I can do otherwise," replied Phillip, giving her the money. She took it, gulping down a little lump which rose in her throat and suppressing the tears that lay on her lashes; then said, with a pretty little assumption of business:

"I want you to write out a note for me to sign."

Without protest Phillip did so, and put the note carefully away.

"Now we come back to the question of employment," said he. "You mentioned a while ago your father's gardening hobby, and I know from experience what excellent work he can do. Do you suppose he would take a position in that line?"

"A month ago he would not, but now he would, gratefully. If you can get him such a place it would perhaps solve our problem."

"I believe that I can," mused Phillip. "Just

wait a minute," and he wrote a note, enclosing it in an addressed envelope which he handed to her. "If your father will take this note to the address on the envelope, I am quite certain they will make a place for him."

She put the note in her hand-bag, and rose, extending her hand. "I don't know how to thank you," she said. "You will have to take it for granted."

He took her warm hand in his own, and if in that moment he had obeyed the impulse that was in his heart, that drew him to her almost irresistibly, that cried out to him with a clamor that could scarcely be stilled, if he had spoken the words that strove to rush upon his lips, the whole course of his life might have been changed — for the better. But again ambition, which grimly forbade any clog upon his movements, interfered, and he held her hand with the tenderness of a brother; no more!

"Really, Elsie, I wish I could have done more for you," he said. "I want you to promise me that if you get into difficulties of any sort you will let me smooth them out for you."

"I have no one else to go to," she replied simply. She stood for a moment in a hesitation that he could not understand. There was something else on her mind, something that she could scarcely bring herself to speak about. "Do you know how much

suffering there is in the world?" she suddenly asked him.

"I suppose there is a great deal of it."

"Do you understand what suffering is?"

His face darkened. "I do," he returned. "I had my share of it — of illness, of poverty, of cold and hunger, of uncleanness, of the social degradation that belongs with want of money. I know these things, not as one emerging from them, but as one cast down among them from luxury. Some people, that experience softens, others it hardens and makes bitter. Sometimes I think it had that latter effect with me."

"It must not be!" she said earnestly. "Phillip, you may know what such things are in your individual self, but I don't think you understand how widely spread they are to-day. What has happened to my family has happened to three-fourths of the people in Hampton, which, as you may or may not know, is composed entirely of poor people, workmen who, in better times, try to buy their own homes. In that village of four or five thousand people there are perhaps one-half of them facing actual starvation at this minute."

"Yes?" inquired Phillip, waiting.

"There are hundreds and hundreds of other villages just like Hampton, where thousands upon

thousands are in the same condition. Things were never so bad as they are now."

"Yes?" he asked again.

"They say — they say" — she halted and stopped, and then, with her face coloring, she stumbled on — "they say that you have had a great deal to do with it. They are saying it everywhere — that you brought on this panic, and that you could stop it. It isn't true, is it?"

"In a measure I suppose it is," admitted Phillip. "The condition was like a pile of loose gunpowder at the side of a railroad track, where constantly passing engines are sending up sparks. One spark was sure to land in that gunpowder and explode it. I merely happened to be the spark, but with no more power than that spark to stop the subsequent destruction."

She recoiled from him with dilating eyes. "It is true, then!" she said.

"I suppose it is, even in the way you look at it; but I assure you, Elsie, that it was necessary. Out of this, better times will result, and better times could not be reached except through this devastation. It is like tearing down a tottering house, lest it should fall upon you, but only tearing down to rebuild better and stronger. It is like a surgical operation, which, painful and cruel as it may seem

at the start, is necessary to save the rest of the body from death and decay."

She shook her head. "I can not understand it; but then, I suppose I could never have been a surgeon."

He smiled and laid his hand upon her shoulder. "No, I don't think you could."

She winced under that touch and glance, not because they were repulsive to her — oh, not because of that! — but because they were the touch and glance of a brother.

Rollins was announced just then, and the interview closed. Rollins, as he came in, met Elsie face to face, and for just one fleeting moment he saw into the pure depths of her eyes. He turned involuntarily to look after her as she went out of the door, and for some minutes afterward he was abstracted in his talk with Kelvin.

CHAPTER VIII

LILLIAN BREED AND HER GRANDFATHER DISPLAY THE BILLION DOLLAR VAULT TO PHILLIP

IN Phillip's touring-car, big Sam up beside the chauffeur, Kelvin and Rensselaer bowled along a pleasant country road, with the latter young gentleman in a state of stupefaction.

"To Forest Lakes!" Rensselaer exclaimed for at least the twentieth time. "Why, you old fox! With us together as often as we have been in the past month, and me talking of Breed, of my aunt, and of the fair Lillian, you never said a word about ever having known Henry Breed or of ever having been to Forest Lakes!"

"I didn't dare," answered Phillip. "I didn't want my panic to come on too soon, which it would have done had my connection with Breed been known."

"But you might have told me," protested Rensselaer, whereat Phillip merely laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"You're right," admitted Rensselaer, reddening. "If you could not be tempted to tell anybody, that

person could not be tempted to tell anybody else ; but now that it is all over, how did you happen to fall in with the old boy? ”

“ Hunted him up! ” said Phillip with sudden fire. “ As you know, this same crowd, of whom Pellman was at that time the head, led my father into a carefully prepared stock deal. It was as deliberate a plucking as any greenhorn ever got at the hands of a lot of confidence men, and it not only broke his purse, but it broke his heart. It left him without ambition, and when he died he left me absolutely penniless. Even as a boy I planned to get even, but I knew I must wait. Down South the chance came. I made that oil-strike, then luck poured in on me, and I began at last to make a lot of money. One day, about a year ago, I read in a paper of Breed’s anger against this same Wall Street coterie. I had formed some good acquaintances down there, and among them was a man who knew Breed personally. He gave me a letter of introduction. I then went to see Breed and proposed this plan. He returned an evasive answer, and I went back South. Shortly after I returned there, however, I discovered that Breed had put into operation the system by which I suggested he drain the country of its currency. I discovered, too, that there were spies watching me, and delving into my entire past history. I said nothing, but I made up my mind then

that my time had come. Sure enough, Breed finally sent for me. He had employed over fifty men for nearly a year to examine every instant of my career, and he was satisfied. I spent a week at Forest Lakes evolving the plan in detail, and — you know the rest.”

“It’s a wonderful thing!” declared Rensselaer with a long breath. “It’s a romance!”

“There is more romance in modern business life than there was in the days of lance and shield,” declared Phillip, smiling.

They had now reached the stone wall that surrounded Forest Lakes, and both were silent as the waving trees within brought to their minds the master of not only this vast estate, but of the modern commercial world. At the gate they were admitted unchallenged, though a score of bronzed men with guns crossed their path between the lodge and the house. At the door old Wilkins met Phillip, but he was no more than within, when there was a rustle of silk in the hall, and Lillian came eagerly forward to meet him.

“I understand,” she said warmly, “that you are the conquering hero.”

“I have done what I was told to do.”

“But you have done it well. Now it is time that you came home to get your reward.”

“I have been fairly well rewarded as it is,” he

replied. "By the way, I have brought with me an old friend of yours."

She turned and almost frowned as they were joined by young Rensselaer, who had stopped a moment to get something from the car, but that fleeting trace of annoyance having passed she was most cordial to him.

"We are glad to see you again, Mr. Rensselaer," she said. "Mrs. Rensselaer has been expecting you for several days, and, like a dutiful nephew, you must pay your respects to her at once. You will find her in her own apartments."

"I don't know if I like being dismissed so summarily," laughed Rensselaer; "but to show you my ability to take a hint I'll go."

"That's all right," she laughed at him; "you may be miffy if you want."

"I'll see you later, Bert," Kelvin called after him as he went up the stairs. Then to Lillian, "Where is Mr. Breed?"

"He is just trying to make the eighth hole out back of the stables, and I think he must be at about the hundredth stroke for it," she laughed. "I will go out and bring him while you remove the dust. Go right up to your old rooms; they have been waiting for you ever since you were here the other time. They were becoming very lonesome for you."

Sam passed them in the hall with the luggage.

"When you get the luggage into Mr. Kelvin's room, Sam," directed Lillian, "you will find Lucy waiting for you in the kitchen." There followed that gleeful falsetto laugh which set them both laughing in sympathy, then Lillian hurried away.

Phillip turned into his apartments with a feeling of relief. He was very glad to rest for a while from the turmoil of the financial crowd; to leave all the nervous tension of that tremendous tragedy behind him. Sam opened the luggage and put it away in drawers and shelves and upon hangers, and had just gone down the back stairs when there came a timid knock at the door. Phillip opened it to a maid who had come with towels, and stepped back in surprise.

"Elsie!" he cried.

"Why, Phillip!" exclaimed Elsie. "I didn't know you were to be here."

"Nor I you," said he. "How does it come about?"

"That letter you gave to father," she explained. "I came with him, applied for a place as maid, and got it. Father is head gardener, thanks to you, and is perfectly happy. We are both doing very nicely. Did Miss Lillian know that it was you who were to occupy these rooms?"

"Why, certainly," replied Phillip. "I was here before."

Elsie said nothing, but she wondered. Lillian had seen Phillip's letter to her grandfather; in fact, Elsie had used it, after it had served its purpose for her father, as an introduction for herself, and she felt sure that it had secured her the place. Moreover, Lillian had casually asked about Phillip, and Elsie had told, in glowing terms, how good he was; yet Lillian had never mentioned that she knew him, and even now, when she told Elsie to bring the towels to this room, she did not mention Phillip's name. Elsie stopped and blushed as she became aware that Phillip was pursuing the same wondering course of thought.

"Does she treat you nicely?" Phillip suddenly demanded.

"Oh, yes, very nicely, indeed," she replied, and Phillip knew that she was not telling him all the truth. He paused, embarrassed, upon his realization of this, and Elsie, suddenly remembering the towels upon her arm, went on into the bath-room and hung them up. As she came out again Phillip stopped her and asked about the rest of the family.

"We are all getting on nicely now," she said. "Grace has brought her children to live with us, and with what father and I earn we can do splendidly; we can even save a little money."

"I am glad of that," he said and stopped, not knowing what else to say.

It was while they were standing, still somewhat confused, that Lillian appeared in the doorway and cast a sharp glance at them both.

"You have not mended that pink frock of mine, Elsie," said Lillian in honeyed tones. "Really, my dear, I had hoped to find it done. I would like to wear it this afternoon. Better see to it right away."

Elsie nodded and hurriedly left the room.

"I am afraid you are a sad flirt," charged Lillian, shaking her finger at Phillip. "Already you are embarrassing that pretty little maid whom you were accidentally kind enough to send to me."

"Has Mr. Breed come in?" asked Phillip, deliberately ignoring her accusation.

"Now I know there is something in all this flirtation," she laughed, though still somewhat piqued. "Yes, Mr. Breed has come in, and he is waiting for you in the library;" and with a coyness that he would not see she led him down-stairs to where Henry Breed, his gaunt and ungainly form clad in outing-flannels, received him with extreme cordiality.

"Well done, my boy, well done!" said he, shaking hands with Phillip. "Come back and look at my picture-gallery now."

In a room opening off the library to the right of the fireplace, where Breed now led him with the glee of a school-boy, a row of photographs ran around

the wall just above the wainscot. Phillip, knowing who and what they were, looked upon them with a smile. They were the photographs of all the more important men of Wall Street, but now upon each photograph there was an X-shaped mark of red ink.

“I checked them off as they fell, one by one,” said Breed, with infinite malice in his withered old face. “Five years ago, when they made that attack on me and beat down my cereal stocks to almost nothing, I vowed that I would put them out of existence, and I have done it,” and he rubbed his thin hands together. “With your help, my boy,” he hastily added, “with your plan and your genius and your own hatred—and with my resources. We are a great team, my son. I have had reports about you. I know every move you made, what you did in every hour that you were in New York.”

Phillip nodded. He had known that he was surrounded by spies.

“Moreover, I know everything you did in all the years before you came to me, and the chief thing you did not do, the one thing which made me select you out of the hundred others that I had under observation, was that you did not get into entanglements with women. How much money did you make of your own?”



"I checked them off as they fell," said Breed .

Phillip drew a long breath. "Nearly half a million," he replied.

"That is right," said Breed, nodding his head with emphasis. "It was in a good cause, eh, Lillian?"

The girl laughed for answer. It was a good cause.

"It is all in a good cause," Breed continued, as if arguing against some accuser. "Business will be healthier. The Stock Exchange, instead of a mere clearing-house for countless bucket-shops, will become once more a place for the legitimate exchange of securities. It is a great work I have done for the country, but they won't realize it until I am dead. Your deals, Phillip? Is every one closed that could be closed?"

"Every one," returned Phillip with satisfaction. "In a few cases I could not secure stocks I wanted, but for the greater part I did. Those who could not pay had nothing to pay with."

"Right again!" and once more Henry Breed nodded his head vigorously. "The stocks were the main thing, after we got back all our cash. Come! I will show you something that no one ever saw but Lillian and myself. Where is Zelphan?" He looked cautiously all around the room.

"He is out in the park," said Lillian.

“I don’t want him to see or to know. Come this way.”

Back from this apartment was a bedroom, and in it was a closet, hung neatly with clothes on hangers. Breed fumbled about for a moment at the back of this closet, when suddenly the whole rear wall swung slowly upon its center. They passed through into a narrow passage, concealed between the chimneys of the two rooms, and from this, after swinging the closet wall shut behind them, the three passed down one long stairway and then another into a deep subcellar, steel lined, like a deposit vault, with four cell-like passages, the heavy steel doors of each secured with a combination lock. Breed led them slowly through, pushing advance electric buttons as he went.

“Absolutely impregnable, this vault,” said he in considerable pride. “Armies could not get through it unless they knew how. The walls are six feet thick, of alternate layers of steel plate and cellulose, which dynamite could hardly destroy. The plates were shipped here from Germany, in plain boxes, and German workmen were brought here directly from the ship, without the slightest knowledge of where they were going. When the work was done they were sent away, and not one of the men knows where he was. Look here.” He led them into an inner vault, and here were row upon row of iron

drawers filled with greenbacks neatly bound in packages, with the amounts marked on the outside. At the end of the vault were rows of drawers filled with gold in coin and ingots.

"Money!" said Breed, gloating over the contents as he opened and closed these drawers. "Money!" said he, and he rubbed his lean old hands together, while his eyes began to gleam. "Not all these receptacles are filled, though. When I had these vaults built I calculated how much money there was in the United States, and built in enough drawers to hold it."

There was something so sinister in the way he said this that even Phillip, himself seething with enormous ambitions, was startled. "It would be impossible to secure all of it," he ventured, but Breed did not hear him. He was wrapped up in some contemplation which heightened immeasurably the gleam in his eyes.

Lillian plucked Phillip by the sleeve, and drew him outside the vault.

"He always likes to be alone a little when he is down here," she whispered.

Phillip stopped in the second passage to examine with interest the heavy hanging of the door. Lillian drew quite near him, and slipped her hand within his arm. He could feel the warmth of that hand instantly. He was more than conscious of

the subtleness of her as she drew close to his side. He was afraid of this girl, afraid of himself. The thrill she gave him was not like that which he had shared with Elsie. With Elsie it was love; with this girl — he drew slightly away.

“Suppose anything should happen to Mr. Breed?” he asked. “What would become of this vault? I presume its combinations are written in some safe place?”

“They are not written anywhere,” she told him. “There is only one person in all the world, besides my grandfather, who knows how to get in here, and that person is myself. Of course I would not tell, would I?”

He looked down at her. Her eyes were upturned to his, and as he gazed into them they blazed. She drew nearer to him. Her red lips were half parted, and through them the warm, moist breath came quickly. He half bent forward, seized with the almost irresistible impulse to take her in his arms. He was ashamed of that impulse. He had not been ashamed when he had longed to clasp Elsie to his breast. With Elsie, his heart had prompted him; with this girl, his blood!

“You must keep away from me!” said he harshly. “There are things I want to do — big things!”

The girl laughed lightly, well content for the time,

but a shrill chuckle startled them both and made them turn hastily. Old Henry Breed stood in the door of the vault, rubbing his hands softly together.

"Good!" said he. "Good, Phillip, my boy! I knew you were about it. You keep as strong as that, and I will make you anything you want to be — anything!"

In the brief time that they had been in the vault a heavy storm had come up, and when they reached the bedroom, Breed, still chuckling, following behind the embarrassed young people, they found the place pitch dark. Phillip, who came out first, fancied that he saw a figure in the room as he emerged from the closet, but as his vision cleared he saw that he must have been mistaken. Out in the library, however, they found the gaunt wireless operator, whose eyes seemed to have the peculiar, cat-like property of shining in the darkness. The operator was just turning on the lights, and a flash of lightning outlined him as he reached up to press the hanging bulb.

"Ugh! It is like the end of the world!" shuddered Lillian, and she clung to Kelvin and her grandfather. "Such storms never come up," she went on in a low tone, "but they make me believe some hideous fate is in store for all of us."

What fate, indeed? Had the curtain of destiny been opened at that moment to Mrs. Rensselaer and

her nephew, up in the former's apartments, quarreling about the advisability and possibility of his marrying Lillian; to Sam and Lucy in the kitchen at war over the first passages of their rude courtship; to Ben White, pottering discontentedly away in the tool-house; to Elsie, on her knees with her face buried in the tear-moistened pillows of her couch; to Phillip and Henry Breed and Lillian, confronting the tall wireless operator in the library, they might well, perhaps, have rushed out into the storm and prayed the lightning to strike them dead; but the tall wireless operator would have gloated over that glimpse into the awful future, and would have prayed to live.

"I have a wireless for you, sir," he said to Mr. Breed. The old man took the yellow slip, and drew under the chandelier. Presently he turned to Phillip triumphantly:

"The Board of Governors of the New York Stock Exchange, after having suspended the Exchange for a week in a vain attempt to straighten out their muddle, have just called a meeting of the members, and the only four to attend were four of the five with whom you did business. The seats of all the others are for sale, and there are no buyers. The Stock Exchange," and his voice rose to a shrill and tremulous shriek, "is wiped out of existence! There is no Stock Exchange!"

CHAPTER IX

WHICH TREATS OF LOVE AND SOCIOLOGY AND CASH
CHIEFLY CASH

AT the selfsame moment, the next morning, three men, in different parts of the huge stone structure, were engaged in curious occupations. In his bedroom near the top of the house, the gaunt wireless operator was upon his knees before his open trunk, his long fingers slowly turning the knob of a combination lock. The lock was one such as is ordinarily used on large vault doors; it was mounted upon a plain iron plate, and was now temporarily clamped upon the front edge of the trunk, to keep it in its normal vertical position. Blagg, as he turned the knob, kept his eyes carefully averted from it, but he listened most intently. Presently his acute fingers caught the faintest perceptible shade of difference, as quickly as, if not quicker than, his ears, for they stopped rigidly upon the instant. Blagg now looked at the dial, then consulted a small card which he held in his left hand, and a look of intense satisfaction, amounting almost to fierceness, flashed into his beady eyes.

The last number of the involved combination had been found by the senses of touch and hearing alone!

“Cash!” he whispered. “Millions of cash, all gathered into one place!”

He changed the combination, marked it carefully upon his card, and started once more, with averted eyes and intent ears, to turn the knob.

In an office on the second floor Phillip Kelvin stood over a large, hand-drawn map that was spread upon his desk. States and rivers were but faintly outlined, and cities but faintly marked except where they were the termini of railroad systems, but every mile of every railroad in the United States was most carefully set down in strong lines, though in inks of six different colors, indicating the six main financial groups. Starting from the network of lines radiating from New York, Phillip’s clear eyes followed each road in turn, ramification by ramification, to the end, going slowly and pausing over each branch, as if to fix more firmly in his mind certain facts connected with it. As he plodded back to the starting-point he nodded his head in quiet satisfaction.

“To make these all one color,” he mused; “that will be one step; then, with millions of cash —”

In his deep subcellar vault, dynamite-proof, electric-drill-proof, army-proof, old Henry Breed stood

before his rows upon rows of iron drawers. One of them was open, and the electric light glinted upon gold. Breed rubbed his withered hands together. His thin lips were wreathed in a smile that was almost reptilian, and his eyes, too, glittered like a snake's.

"Cash!" he gloated. "Millions of cash, and millions more to come!"

There was the sound of a bell in the big two-story hall. Blagg hastily stopped his practice, restored his combination lock to its strong-box, turned triple keys upon it, and double locked his trunk.

Into Kelvin's room came huge black Sam. Phillip looked up with a quizzical smile which Sam always aroused, and the smile turned to one of keen amusement as he noted a long, red scratch on Sam's right cheek which exactly balanced the permanent scar upon his left. Had the lobe of his right ear been nipped as was that of his left, his countenance would have been exactly symmetrical.

"Breakfast is called, suh," announced the negro.

"Where did you get that scratch, Sam?" asked Phillip.

"Miss Lucy," answered Sam. "She suah am a pow'ful scratcheh!" and throwing back his head he opened his mouth to an enormous extent, emitting a loud guffaw which ended in a shrill falsetto. "But Ah sweah, Mistuh Phillip, ef Ah eveh mah'y

that gal, Ah suttently will bring heh pride maghty low."

Down into the vault tripped Lillian Breed, her dark cheeks red from her brisk morning walk, her dark eyes bright, her scarlet lips parted over her white teeth. "I hurried in just ahead of Doctor Zelphan, grandfather," she said. "He will be here in a moment. The breakfast-bell rang as I came in at the door."

With the haste of a boy Breed followed her out through the four vestibules, closing the heavy doors of each one behind him, throwing off the combination of its lock, and turning out the lights beyond. He paused a moment to contemplate the door of the last one, then he put his hands upon Lillian's shoulders.

"And in all this world only we two know," he said.

"Mr. Kelvin knows," she reminded him.

"But not the combinations," he hastened to assure her. "Do you know how I have won my supremacy? It is by finding big men to do both my planning and my executing; by knowing such men when I see them. Kelvin is one of these, and to such a man as he the greatest incentive that can be given him is to show him the tools with which he may work. I showed him these enormous stores of actual cash for that purpose, and the knowledge

is safe with him. I know men. We two, however, are the only ones who know the way into that vault." An intangible film seemed to drop over Lillian's eyes for a second. In the dimness he could not see it, but her breast heaved and her breath came quicker, and that he could recognize. "You appreciate the power of it all, don't you?" he continued. "Perhaps a little too much; but don't be mistaken, Lillian. This is not a game of tennis, at which a woman can play. I have taken you into my confidence this far only because, in case anything should happen to me, I want you to get at the stores that will make you the richest woman in the world."

"Doctor Zelphan will be hunting you," she reminded him.

Aroused from his momentary forgetfulness of his one bugbear, the shrewd specialist whom he had employed to look after his health and who, in that capacity, had become a necessarily oppressive burden, he hurried up through the one room in his house to which Zelphan had been denied access, and with Lillian passed into the hall where Doctor Zelphan stood awaiting them. His knob of a nose was red with impatience.

"You promised, when I left you here at the house this morning, to join me at the head of Big Lake," he charged Breed. "If I can not take your word

for a longer morning walk, I shall have to stay by you until you do. Put on your hat and heavy coat."

"But breakfast is ready," protested Lillian.

The doctor peered at her with such open contempt that she flushed and straightened her shoulders. It was evident that there was something deeply antagonistic between these two. Indeed, Doctor Zelphan, openly classing her as a neurotic, had once alluded to her as "the sins of the fathers unto the third generation."

"If I employ a man to make me do things, I suppose I ought to do them," Breed laughed, and securing his hat and coat went out with the Spartan doctor, just as Phillip came down the stairway.

Lillian waited for Phillip, and tucked her arm playfully into his as he stepped from the bottom stair. "I almost had the honor of going in to breakfast with my grandfather," she said gaily; "but see how much greater honor my disappointment brings me."

"I admit it," said Phillip with a smile; "only you are not expressing my merit strongly enough to do me justice."

She felt keenly the coldness beneath his echo of her raillery, and the inward contempt that he felt for her, but she was a true daughter of Eve, and knew that he felt the warmth of her hand upon his arm; she knew, too, that he sometimes trembled

under her unexpected touch, and with that she was content, for the time.

In the dining-room they found only Mrs. Rensselaer and her nephew. Mrs. Rensselaer bowed stiffly to Phillip, who, though accounted worth a million or so through his own exertions, was of a minor family, while she was of the very oldest; but she was delighted to say good morning to her young protégée, whom she was shudderingly bound to coach for introduction into certain most exclusive circles—"not the *parvenus*, you know, but the really irreproachable people."

"How charming you are looking this morning, child!" she exclaimed. "Did you ever see such a picture of health, Herbert?"

Herbert had his own opinions about Lillian. There was too much nervous energy within her to strike him as quite normal after his acquaintance with healthy outdoor girls. There was too much elasticity in her step, too much color in her cheeks, too much sparkle in her eyes.

"She is the goddess of the morning," he stated, "the very liqueur of life, the very spirit of spring, the very quintessence of what-you-may-call-'em. Howdy, Miss Lillian."

"I'm in my element," responded that young lady, laughing; "for the imp of perversity seems to have been let loose upon us this morning. Grandfather

and his doctor, Mr. Kelvin, Mr. Rensselaer, and myself, all have fallen victims to him. Every one has but Mrs. Rensselaer; and who could consider her in the light of a victim to anything?"

"No one, I trust," said that lady solemnly, and began to gloom in the utmost majesty, for Mrs. Rensselaer was most particular about her dignity when among the *canaille*. Inspired by her eminence among these people of no birth, Mrs. Rensselaer made the rest of that breakfast as much a function of state as possible.

After breakfast, Phillip, wearied of this play of cross-purposes, slipped away by himself for a few moments, against the time when Breed should call upon him or send for him to take up the heavy projects they had under way. He walked back toward the kitchen-garden, where Blagg, having finished breakfast in the housekeeper's dining-room with old Fargus, Breed's secretary, had already preceded him. Blagg was leaning over the fence, listening, with a grim smile, to a tirade from Ben White.

"Why," White was demanding, "has this man the power to hire me, to hire anybody? Why is it possible, in this country of so-called equal opportunities, for one man to accumulate wealth enough to hire a hundred people to wait on him? Why is our social condition such that the stronger can oppress the weaker?"

"Possibly, Ben," broke in Phillip, "so that only the stronger shall survive, as has been the law since Cain killed Abel. No doubt if Abel had lived, he would have been the father of a race of weaklings who would have died out of their own invirility, after weakening the race of Cain."

Both White and Blagg had turned, startled at the interruption, but now Blagg fixed upon Phillip a searching eye, and declared:

"You don't believe quite what you say, Mr. Kelvin."

"Quite true," admitted Phillip. "It becomes necessary, however, to say such absurd things in order to bring down the general average of what my friend, Citizen White, says."

White, still bleached with the traces of his one-time plastering business, looked up with a smile. "Good morning, Plutocrat," he observed. "Here is one plutocrat, Blagg, whom I am bound to save when the revolution comes. He secured our places here for my daughter and myself."

"When the revolution comes we'll see about it," said Blagg, laughing, and walked away.

"There's a smart man," said White, nodding in the direction of Blagg. "He has all the facts of our social condition at his finger-tips. He can tell you how many people starved last year, and he can tell you why they starved. He can show you, in

our scheme of government, the hundred flaws which permit all these vicious inequalities of wealth."

"Can he tell you," quizzed Phillip, "why shiftless men fail in business? Why drones hang to the lowest positions? Why unambitious workmen are the first to be laid off when a pinch comes? Why improvident people have nothing saved for a rainy day?"

It was a direct thrust at White, and he colored under it. With anybody else he would have blustered; but Phillip knew his history.

"It is all very well to talk of inequalities," went on Phillip, "but most of the talk I have heard has been irrational, and so useless. I think our sociological mistakes can be remedied, and will be remedied, but if the remedy were left to the people who talk most about it we would have things radically wrong the other way. How are those wonderful string-beans getting on?"

"Fine!" replied White, brightening. "Come inside and look at them," and, touched upon the point of his greatest enthusiasm, he showed Phillip about his garden, descanting for a full twenty minutes upon the culture of green corn, and illustrating his lecture with growing examples.

Mrs. White and Elsie came across from the Whites' cottage. Elsie had run down for an early

morning call and was on her way into the garden. Seeing Phillip, she was about to return to the house instead, but her mother dragged her on.

"Good for sore eyes to see you, Phillip," hailed Mrs. White, gay in a new dress and smirking with renewed prosperity. "We owe a mighty lot to you, Mr. Kelvin, and it's fine to get a chance to thank you. Goodness! We've been here an age it seems, and we haven't seen you once in all that time."

"I have been rather busy, Mrs. White," said Phillip; "but you may rest assured that I have not forgotten my old friends."

"I knew you hadn't," she returned heartily. "I told Elsie so. Says I, 'He might have rich girls setting their caps at him, but he ain't blind; and he ain't the kind to forget his old friends.' Didn't I, Elsie?"

The girl flushed painfully, but she was too wholesome not to see the humor, embarrassing though it might be, of her mother's transparent intention, and she revealed her white teeth in a dazzling smile.

"Indeed you did, mother," she replied, laughing, "and much more which it is entirely unnecessary to repeat, since Phillip knows us all of old."

In the meantime Blagg had gone to his operating-room, and, having tested his instruments and made

ready for the day's work, he went to the window overlooking the garden and gazed out in deep thought.

Young Rensselaer strolled into the room, partly to escape from his aunt's insistence that he should court and marry Lillian Breed, and partly because both Blagg and his art interested him. Blagg turned and nodded, then looked out the window again, and Rensselaer joined him.

"I suppose that if I were to offer a penny for your thoughts, and you should take me up, I would be a heavy loser," he observed.

"It depends upon what kind of thoughts you would want for your penny," returned Blagg. "To be perfectly frank, I was thinking of young Kelvin out there."

"What about him?" inquired Rensselaer quickly.

"Seems to be a nice sort of fellow," returned Blagg evasively.

"I should say he is!" declared Rensselaer. "I punched cows with him for six months out in Montana, and I never found a better or squarer fellow anywhere. If the world were made up of people like Kelvin it would be all right."

"Yes," admitted Blagg, "if the world were made up of people exactly like Kelvin it would be all right; they would all have an equal chance. But

since the world contains but a few men like him, he is dangerous."

"Nonsense!" replied Rensselaer. "Why?"

"Because he alone, aided by Breed's money, was able to destroy a tremendous institution like the Stock Exchange," returned Blagg heatedly. "It should have been wiped out of existence no doubt, but in the process of breaking it up, thousands of banks went under, thousands of business concerns were bankrupted, and thousands of factories suspended work. Countless thousands of helpless poor were thrown out of employment and faced starvation; and these are the people who invariably suffer."

Rensselaer was silent under an entirely new train of ideas.

"See now what follows," Blagg went on. "Their end having been accomplished, Kelvin having enriched himself by a million or so of dollars and Breed by untold millions, Kelvin, by merely opening his mouth, with Breed's consent, stops the panic. What does he do? He issues to the press this morning an announcement that the cash drain has stopped, that Breed no longer requires shipments of actual money for his bread, and that one hundred million dollars of currency, a very small percentage of what he has taken in, is to be put

back into circulation. What happens next? Immediately confidence will be restored, credit will be reëstablished, banks and business houses will readjust themselves, factories will begin operating, people will go back to work. Don't you see the monstrous thing in this? The very lives of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have depended upon this man's word! This is not young Kelvin's work; he is an opportunist, able to see with unusual shrewdness his chances as they come to him; but the crime of it all is in the social system which permits any one man to hold so much power over the life and welfare of so vast an army of human beings. It is all wrong. It is monstrous! Some day that system will be swept away, and with it must be swept young Kelvin and all his kind."

"You talk like Kelvin himself used to talk out on the ranch," Rensselaer smilingly remarked. "Kelvin has his own dreams of reform. You ought to compare notes."

"I doubt if our dreams would be found to be of the same stuff," returned Blagg grimly. "I scarcely think that his deeds, up to date, would entitle him to any philanthropic claims. The only ones benefited by his activity are a very few of his own kind, Breed and himself, chiefly. I don't see what has been gained by the hundreds of thousands

of workmen who had to do the only actual suffering in the campaign. Take the gardener out there. He and his family would have starved had not Kelvin personally secured them these places — because he used to board with them when he was poor. Even if Kelvin could have reached all of his innocent victims in person, and could have been of benefit to them, it would only have been wholesale charity. And charity is the gross insult of our century to men who are able, willing, and anxious to make a living by hard toil out of the natural resources on this globe. Every man has a right to delve into the soil, abundantly fertile to keep us all, and reap from it a living. It was for this that the Creator provided the earth and its richness."

"See the sunshine and hear the little birds twitter," flippantly interrupted Rensselaer, who did most of his thinking on the instalment plan. "In the meantime would it not be a pity to sweep out of existence such a tall, well-built, good-looking, decent sort of chap as Kelvin?"

Phillip and Elsie had by this time left the garden, and were now walking slowly toward the house.

"Yes," Blagg admitted, "it would; and it makes it all the harder when you see so beautiful a girl as that looking up at him with that amount of adoration."

Rensselaer nodded his head. The advancing pair

had drawn quite near to the house. Kelvin was carrying a basket for the girl, and was pointing out something in a tree-top. She was not following the direction of his hand, but was looking up at him, and the look in her eyes was such as comes to a woman for but one man. Kelvin turned, and she shifted her gaze. Immediately brought to herself, she was all animation and interest in the thing about which he was talking. Lillian Breed, coming from a cross path just behind Phillip and Elsie and half concealed by shrubbery, stopped instantly as she saw them, clutching her hand upon her breast and half crouching.

"Look at that girl!" said Rensselaer. "In figure she is positively the most beautiful creature I have ever seen, but she is beautiful like a cat, like a tigress."

He glanced at Blagg's face and half recoiled. It flashed upon him instantly that if Lillian were a tigress, here was the male of her species. His eyes were blazing, and his lips were parted in almost a snarl as he viewed the succeeding tableau. Lillian suddenly advanced upon Kelvin and Elsie, startling them both. They found her smiling. Blagg and Rensselaer could see her give some brief but peremptory directions to Elsie, and the maid, hastily taking the basket from Phillip's hand, hurried into the house. Phillip, outwardly unmoved, saw her go

and outwardly unmoved he walked with Lillian out of view around the wing of the house.

“And the queer thing of it,” said Rensselaer, a trifle regretfully, “is that he doesn’t care a hang for either of them.”

“That’s it!” exclaimed Blagg. “That’s just what I’m telling you. He cares for no creature in this world but himself!”

“I don’t believe that either,” declared Rensselaer.

CHAPTER X

GEORGE BLAGG ENDS A CONVERSATION BY WHISTLING THE MARSEILLAISE

AS Henry Breed, released from Zelphan and breakfast, opened the door of Kelvin's office, Lillian started hastily from the back of Phillip's chair, over which she had been leaning. The girl was confused, but the young man was not, though his eyes rested speculatively upon Doctor Zelphan, who, following Breed with a bundle of golf-sticks, stood regarding Phillip and Lillian with a half-smile that was almost concealed by his bushy beard.

"How nearly do you know?" asked Breed, ignoring the girl altogether.

Kelvin, his map put away now, bent over a very large sheet of white cardboard, ruled and cross-ruled in blue and red, and swept his eye across the diagrammatically arranged figures.

Breed watched the clean-cut face of the young man sharply. In spite of the intense concentration in Kelvin's eyes, there was no trace of lines in his brow. Concentration, then, was no effort to him.

His prominent jaws were firmly closed, but there was no tenseness of the muscles. Determination, then, was a habit with him, not a momentary pose. His blue eyes were clear, his complexion was fresh and pink, with no trace of dryness or sallowness. He had not, then, spent any portion of his night in worry. He sat easily in his chair, his broad shoulders in the comfort of habitual erectness and his well-formed hands lying carelessly but steadily upon the edge of the table; yet he had his huge subject well in hand.

"The situation clears up more the further I go into it," said he. "Out of the panic we have emerged with a considerable profit in cash, and with actual possession of eighteen per cent. of the New York Central, and about the same of the Pennsylvania, Southern and Union Pacific, Northern Pacific, Southern Railway, and New Haven groups. These practically govern all other railroads."

Breed sat down upon the stiff settee which Kelvin had insisted upon having in this room instead of a padded Morris-chair, and placing the tips of his long wrinkled fingers together, looked contemplatively out of the window, his bald head glistening beneath the edge of his golf-cap. His beady eyes glittered above his hawk-like nose; his pointed chin was tilted.

"Is it enough?" he asked. "I want absolute

control of every mile of railroad in the United States."

"I think you have enough," replied Kelvin.

Breed looked at him questioningly, then he turned sharply to his granddaughter. "Lillian, you had better run along and get ready, if you are going out upon the links with us."

The girl, who had lounged into the window embrasure upon the entrance of Breed and the doctor, straightened up and started slowly toward the door, then suddenly she wheeled. "I want to stay!" she declared. "Grandfather, do you know what you are doing to me? I have all the nervous energy you failed to bequeath to my father. You coop me up here. I must have an interest in something; something big, or I shall go mad!"

The doctor was the only one of the trio who scrutinized her closely. The other two, for some unaccountable reason, kept their eyes averted, Kelvin studious upon his diagram and Breed looking out the window again, apparently oblivious of the fact that Lillian's gaze was bent upon him, her dark eyes flashing, her unusually red lips half parted, the over-color in her oval cheeks surging in carmine waves, her breast heaving, her fists clenched.

"I tell you I shall die if I have no battle to fight except myself and the social inanities which Mrs. Rensselaer is presumed to teach me before I may



“Leave the room!” Breed said curtly

show myself in Madison Avenue!" she declared. "As an ambition, that does not seem to promise much scope. I want larger things — they can not be too large. I, too, would build an empire or destroy one!"

For the first time Kelvin looked quietly up at her. She was a picture of striking beauty, but there was about her a certain savageness, such as a Lucrezia Borgia might have had, Kelvin thought, or such as animated the woman-vultures of the French Revolution.

Henry Breed was possessed of no such dramatic comparisons. "Leave the room!" he said curtly.

For just a moment she paused as if in thought of further defiance, then, catching Kelvin's eye, she half held forward her hand as if in appeal to him. There was a physical change in the contour of his eyelids, in the focusing of his eyes, and in the narrowing of his pupils, so slight as to be almost indefinable, and yet in them there sat such a look of stony impregnability, while his lips squared ever so slightly but uncompromisingly, that she suddenly whirled upon her heel and strode out the door, slamming it behind her.

Doctor Zelphan followed her with his eyes, but the half-smile was still lurking under his beard. The other two heaved sighs when she was gone. Breed dismissed the episode immediately.

"Now you may explain," he told Kelvin.

"Well," said Kelvin, "the entire railroad map is changed since the panic. All the names familiar to the railroad world have passed into history. Next week they will have been forgotten. The enormous control of each of those men was like an inverted pyramid, of which he was the supporting apex. Your slaughter of the entire margin system of stock-gambling pulled out one block after another from the under side of those pyramids, and each and every one of them, disintegrating, fell upon its builder, crushing him flat to the earth. Not one of them can rise again from the wreck."

Breed nodded his head in comprehension, and his thin, flexible lips bent into a cruel smile. "I know," said he. "There is a red mark upon each of their photographs."

Kelvin nodded briefly. "But those men have shown us the way. Let me give you, as an illustration, the control of one man. For five years he denied that he had any interest in a certain large road; but there came a time when a holding company in which he was interested had secured fifteen per cent. of the stock of that road, and this fifteen per cent. was the largest single minority holding. The man in question held, in his own name, less than ten per cent. of the stock of the holding company, but it was to the interest of every member

that he nominate his own directors and control the destiny of the company. Through this control, therefore, he virtually possessed, personally, that fifteen per cent. of the stock of the big railroad. With that fifteen per cent. he sent, in his own name, an appeal to the scattered stock-holders for proxies, and through his personal prestige he came into the stock-holders' meeting of the big road voting sixty per cent. of the stock, and put through his own slate of directors and officers. Then, through similar means and through this one road, he controlled all its branches and dependents, aggregating many thousands of miles, *and all despite the fact that he himself actually held not one per cent. of the value of all this stock!*"

Breed nodded his head. "I have a check-mark upon that man's photograph, too. This deal was a part of the pyramid which crushed him."

"But it can't crush you," returned Phillip. He poised his pencil over different points in his diagram, where, opposite the name of each road, was set its total number of outstanding stocks and bonds. He was not hunting any specific information, for he had it all well in mind, but merely hovering over the figures as a general might cast his eye across his ranks, to make sure that nothing was amiss.

"You are the only man in the world to-day who is able to bring practically endless resources to the

support of any project," he continued. "For instance, with an actual holding of less than one per cent. of the total stock of all the railroad corporations in the United States, you are able to dominate every mile of iron highway, to depose or elevate any man in the railroad business, from brakeman to president; that is, after you have taken the reins. You have only one rival."

Breed raised his head quickly. "Rollins?" he said.

"Sumner Rollins," repeated Kelvin.

"What made *you* think so? You spoke of him yesterday."

"I met him during the days of the panic. Railroads are a hobby with him. He thinks that, with proper management, they can be made practically safe to the public, and still yield better dividends. He is a conservative man, who has never speculated upon margin; in fact, he is one of the few men whom your campaign against the Stock Exchange and Stock Exchange methods could not affect. During the closing days of the panic, when such stocks as Northern Pacific were reduced to the absurd figure of twenty-nine, Rollins was in the market to buy actual stock for spot cash; and in several of these roads he is to-day the second minority stock-holder to yourself. I kept close record of his

transactions, and, in fact, I sold him some Northern Pacific and some New Haven myself."

"You did!" exclaimed Breed, surprised and not altogether pleased.

For the first time since the opening of the interview Kelvin laid down his pencil and leaned back in his chair. His face was a trifle pale. He was about to reveal himself perhaps more daringly than Breed would like. "I did not exceed my instructions," he explained, "for, in pursuance of my plan, you merely told me to secure of the six leading stocks all that I could. I did so, but found that I had much more than necessary of some stocks and not enough of others, so I traded. I could well afford to let Rollins or any other man have some of my surplus Northern Pacific and New Haven for the purpose of obtaining more Union Pacific and Southern Railroad stock. As it stands now, I have secured the exact balance necessary to secure control in each organization, according to their difficulty of control. Whatever I had over this necessary amount I let go, in order to secure minor holdings sufficient to entitle you to a personal representation in every railroad, major or minor, in the United States."

Breed studied young Kelvin for a long time in thoughtful silence, but in the end he merely grunted

by way of comment. "How strong a rival do you consider Rollins to be?" he asked.

"Formidable," replied Kelvin. "All the more so because he has a personal dislike for you."

"How does he know I had him let out?" asked Breed.

Kelvin smiled. "How could he help knowing it? He was dismissed from the management of the old list of roads, formerly known as the Parsons group, immediately after you secured a place in the directorate for Hammel, who was distinctly known as your man. He charges very openly that he was decapitated because he stood in the way of the scheme by which the Parsons group was deliberately wrecked and laid open to capture by the MacIntyre interests."

Breed shrugged his shoulders. "Mere dislike doesn't make a man formidable," he declared. "I would rather fight against a man who hates me than against any other kind."

"Not when he is square, as Rollins is," objected Kelvin. "Don't underestimate this man, Mr. Breed. I don't know where he got the money, but —"

"The independent steel corporations," interrupted Breed.

Kelvin stopped a moment and considered this new thought. "That's so!" he exclaimed, and

made a pencil note on the margin of his diagram. "Then he is doubly formidable. As I told you, he holds, second to yourself, the highest minority block of stock in each of the big systems. He is going to make a strong campaign for proxies, and he is to be feared because, while not so well known to the public as yourself, he is more favorably known; and when they come to investigate him they will find him to be a man of stern probity."

It was the blunt truth, said bluntly. Kelvin waited in some trepidation to see how Breed would take it.

"The people are fools!" declared Breed in some heat. "I know what they think of me, but they have no right to do so. I have given away colossal fortunes in the endowment of universities, churches, and public institutions, and they give me no thanks for it; none whatever! It is time that the public was chastised, and mine is the appointed hand!"

His voice arose to a sudden shrill pitch, and he began to tremble. Doctor Zelphan, who had been watching him, hurried to him and put a broad red hand upon his shoulder.

"A wireless for you," broke in a new voice.

Kelvin, turning, saw Blagg standing in the doorway. How long he had been there, none of them could have told. For the first time Kelvin noticed that Blagg's thinness was the thinness of a man

whose flesh had been reduced to nothing but sinewy muscle. He was not much above thirty-five, and there was an indefinable air of recklessness about him; secrecy, too, for after a fleeting glance he invariably kept his eyes averted from certain people.

Breed took the wireless and read it; then he looked up at Kelvin with a curious smile. "So you think I'd better send for Rollins and make peace with him?" he said. "You suggested that yesterday, I think."

Kelvin colored slightly. He felt that he had transparently wasted time in coming to this transparent conclusion. "It seems inevitable to me," he replied.

"Well, I have already sent for him," announced Breed dryly. "Here is his answer. He will arrive here at three o'clock," and with an air of triumph Breed arose, and, accompanied by the doctor, went out.

Blagg gazed at Kelvin curiously a moment, and then laughed, a laugh that was entirely mirthless. "He always has a surprise for you, hasn't he?" he ventured.

"He is a remarkable man," said Kelvin soberly; "a big man."

"Yes," agreed Blagg, "everything about him is big; his fortune especially. The population of the United States is now almost ninety millions. Henry

Breed holds, according to my guess, nearly twenty dollars in money for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Ten million of these people are on the verge of starvation, and their twenty dollars to-day would stand between them and hell. Seventy million more are merely living like dogs."

"If they had their twenty dollars apiece they would spend it," explained Kelvin suavely, "and some Breed or other would have it again in no time."

"But if there were no Breeds to establish enormous money-draining systems by means of the excessive rate that must be paid for necessities, the circulation would stay among the people."

"If there were no Breeds," retorted Phillip, "you would not have a job. Here is a wireless I wish you would get off to New York."

A change came over Blagg's countenance. His expression had been an inquiring one, almost an eager one; now it suddenly set in hard lines. He took the form that Phillip handed him and walked out the door. As he went he was whistling *The Marseillaise*.

CHAPTER XI

LILLIAN BREED ANNOUNCES THAT SHE WISHES TO BECOME AN EMPRESS

EARLY luncheon at Forest Lakes was usually a deadly dull function, and to-day it seemed more so than ever. A preoccupation seemed to settle upon them all. Mrs. Rensselaer was the only placid one among them, she being engaged in the comfortable occupation of sniffing contemptuously at the entire family, an occupation made easy for her by the fact that Henry Breed had started in life as a chore-boy. Could she have seen into the mind of any of the five others at the table, Henry and Lillian Breed's, young Kelvin's, Doctor Zelphan's, or even her own nephew's, she would have been startled out of her placidity for all time to come. In three of them, at least, there burned and seethed ambitions as unlimited as the blue vault of the endless sky, ambitions as far-reaching as those which drove Napoleon to St. Helena, as those which made Alexander weep, as those which cast Lucifer from heaven; and each, at this particular moment,

had concentrated all his thought upon himself and his own plan of supremacy. Doctor Zelphan's thoughts were different, but they were none the less startling, and young Rensselaer was engaged upon vague dreams of military conquest and glory. At that very moment he was wishing for a war!

Out in the housekeeper's dining-room Blagg and old Fargus, the latter Breed's ancient secretary, reduced through years of hopeless service to a mere automaton, lunched in equal silence, and Fargus would have been equally startled with Mrs. Rensselaer if he could have seen into the leaping mind of Blagg.

At Breed's table they had nearly finished, when Breed, looking up from the bowl of mush and milk to which Zelphan restricted him at noon, suddenly addressed Phillip. "Kelvin," said he, "if you had your own way about things what would you do?"

The question was so nearly in line with Kelvin's thoughts that it startled him, yet with a whimsical smile he replied:

"I would make myself emperor of the world."

"Good!" cried Lillian. "And I—I would be empress."

"Lillian!" primly protested Mrs. Rensselaer. "You don't mean anything, I know, but you should be no more bold here, even in jest, than abroad."

"How do you know I don't mean it?" returned

Lillian, with an earnestness which could not be altogether concealed by her raillery. "If Mr. Kelvin could make himself emperor of the world, I would exhaust every wile known to femininity, every stratagem known to diplomacy, every force known to warfare, to become his consort. To be empress of the world, to have life-and-death dominion over every living creature, to hold in my hand more power than has ever been possessed by any human being — for these things I would jeopardize my happiness, my life, my very soul."

Phillip glanced across at her with more interest than he had yet shown, and found, with a thrill which he could not deny, her eyes shining into his.

"Really," said Mrs. Rensselaer, rising, "we are becoming very dramatic."

"No," remarked her nephew dryly, getting up from his chair, "we are only telling our right names."

An hour or so later, Phillip, striving to gain a comprehensive grasp upon still another huge project he had in mind, had occasion to go into Blagg's room, and there he found Lillian. Blagg was glowing.

"You speak of 'dominion,'" Lillian said animatedly, conscious of her power over the gaunt operator, and, perhaps, using it to pique Phillip; "here it is," and she indicated the new wireless

apparatus, which, introduced but recently, was rapidly becoming universal. It was supplied with keys, like a type-writer, and differed from that machine in only one essential respect — the paper in it was upon a roll, like a ticker tape, and from either side of the contrivance a glass tube filled with a phosphorescent greenish light ran straight up to the ceiling.

“With all instruments thrown into key, Mr. Blagg can reach any one or all of the wireless stations on the face of the globe,” she continued. “At his finger-tips is all the world!”

As she spoke the greenish phosphorescence in the tubes began to glow and crackle in regular waves, the mechanism of the type-writing device began to click, and upon the tape there appeared a succession of “M’s.” Blagg self-consciously drew out his watch and held it while he watched the tape. The machine began to print figures beginning with “1” and ending with “10,” then one sharp click and another “M” was printed. He put his watch back into his pocket.

“Noon at Washington,” he said. “I am not a second out of the way.” Mechanically he reached out to the keys of his machine, and wrote upon it the letters of the alphabet, in apparent idleness, from “A” to “G” and back again, then signed “G. B.”

"Does that idle tampering with the keys carry any place?" asked Kelvin.

"All over the world," replied Blagg in a low voice, then suddenly arousing himself, he explained in an offhand manner, "You see, every day, at this hour, Washington time is sent out, not originally as a correctant of time all over the world, but as a test of all machines."

"Those letters, then, that you just printed?" asked Kelvin incredulously. "They were repeated, too, on every wireless machine in the world?"

"Yes," replied Blagg with a curious air of smiling repression; "every operator in the world got that message."

It was upon the tip of Kelvin's tongue to say that it was a very trivial and inconsequential thing to do, to have perhaps ten thousand machines repeat all those idle letters at a time when they must be interrupting a number of important communications; but, after all, he reflected, that was the business of the International Wireless Company.

Kelvin suddenly heard the ring of a buzzer that sounded like his own, and he turned to leave the room. Lillian started out with him. As they neared the door there was a crackling in the wireless tubes and a faint click. A phosphorescent glow flared upon the walls of the room. Kelvin turned, still impressed with the wonderful reach of the wire-

less, and found Blagg looking, not at the tape of the machine, but at him, with the utmost malevolence.

Three hours later old Fargus came shuffling into Kelvin's room. "Mr. Breed wishes me to tell you that Mr. Rollins has arrived, and that he would like to see you in the library."

In that dim old room Kelvin found Rollins sitting uncompromisingly upright, his lips compressed, his jaw set, his eyes stern. Breed sat easily back in his chair. Kelvin was struck once more, as he had been a score of times, with the idea that, no matter what situation might arise, Breed was the psychological master of it.

Rollins brightened at the sight of Kelvin, and arose at once to shake hands with him. "Glad to see you, Kelvin," he said, but there was a certain amount of reserve in his greeting, for he did not altogether approve of Kelvin. There was, moreover, a certain sternness about Rollins which never varied, a sternness of purpose that went well with his appearance of immaculate cleanness. He was a smooth-faced man of under forty, with unusually frank eyes which inspired trust at once.

"Mr. Rollins, without any preliminary conversation, has just told me that he is not here for a compromise," Breed interposed upon their greeting.

"I am sorry to hear that, Rollins," said Kelvin.

"I have been going over the situation pretty thoroughly, and am willing to admit that if you fight us it will annoy us somewhat; but it will be a losing venture for you."

"I don't think it," returned Rollins, his face hardening. "I am willing to pit my reputation with the public against Mr. Breed's at any time."

"Why make it a matter of reputation, Rollins?" suggested Breed. "Why not make it a matter of self-interest? I don't mind being frank with you, because subterfuge would be of no use. I want, and mean to have, control of the railroads; you want the same thing. I think we both could be satisfied. I consider you the best railroad man in the United States to-day, and I want you to manage the consolidated lines. Let us put our stock and influence together, and we will both attain our ends."

"Impossible," declared Rollins. "Our ends are so radically different. I am not entirely a philanthropist, but here is a case where I look upon philanthropy as good business. Railroads have been conducted so exclusively for the profit, not of their stock-holders, but of their control, that they have overreached themselves in that very aim. An entirely different system will do away with the necessity for rebates, allow the establishment of a flat freight-rate, render the roads more efficient, en-

able them to carry more load with less horse-power, give better service in every way, and insure something that has never been attained in the history of railroads — absolute safety to the public as well as reasonable dividends.”

“Precisely my own aims,” stated Breed. “I am perfectly willing that you should carry out your ideas.”

“I don’t believe you,” retorted Rollins bluntly; “nor could any amount of persuasion on your part convince me. I know your record too well. You were seventy-eight years old your last birthday, and for seventy-eight years you have worked exclusively for Henry Breed. It is not likely that you will change at this late day.” He turned abruptly to Phillip. “Kelvin,” he demanded, “do you believe what he says?”

Phillip was taken aback by the suddenness of the question and hesitated.

Breed laughed. “It is one of Mr. Kelvin’s unfortunate traits to be truthful,” he observed, “and to save him embarrassment I would not press that question, Mr. Rollins. Instead, we might as well come distinctly to business. I want you for my manager, and I mean to have you. I offer you the opportunity now, directly and for the last time. Pool your stock with mine, giving me control and you management. Do you accept that?”

"No," said Rollins.

"Then I will *take* control," returned Breed. "If I do, and offer you the general management, will you accept it then?"

"If you gain absolute control," said Rollins with a short laugh, "and if, *after you have done so*, you offer me absolute management, with a free hand, then I shall believe you."

As Rollins rose, apparently considering the interview terminated, Breed rang a bell and it was Elsie White who answered it.

"This is Mr. Rollins, Elsie," said Breed. "Show him to the suite next to Kelvin's. You can't get back to-night with any comfort, except by auto, Rollins, but we shall be very glad to have you as our guest."

Rollins had intended to refuse this offer, but he looked at Elsie White and accepted. He was a man who owed all his success to his faculty of instantaneous decision, and at the door of his apartments he engaged Elsie in conversation — about Forest Lakes — as long as he could, in decency.

After Rollins had gone, Breed looked at Kelvin quizzically. "I suppose you have a solution for our problem?" he suggested.

"I am waiting to hear yours," returned Phillip.

"There is only one feasible way," declared Breed promptly. "We must subsidize the press."

Kelvin did not laugh outright, but he came near it. "You have tried that, haven't you?" he ventured.

"Only in a minor degree," declared Breed, "but found no trouble about it."

"No," admitted Phillip, "you had no trouble about it. That is, you wished to create a certain amount of sentiment, or rather a certain dispute of sentiment. When your agents found they could not influence certain papers, they took others, and they took the easiest ones, and the ones least worth while; but here you are proposing an entirely different proposition. You want to obtain control of all the railroads in the United States. Their ramifications extend into every state and territory and include nearly one quarter of a million miles of track. Remember that the majority stock-holders of practically every one of these roads are the public. In order to reach them you must completely control almost every paper in the land; and even you have not enough money. Even if they were all for sale, which they are not, the amount necessary to acquire them would run into the billions. More of them than you think are not upon the market, and the surest way to antagonize them is to attempt to purchase their principles. You can not subsidize the press of the United States. Count that as final."

Breed nodded. He remembered one or two

disastrous experiments during his early operations. "What, then, do you propose?" he asked. "From your attitude you evidently have in mind a plan of action."

"I am not quite ready to lay it before you," replied Phillip. "It still requires some figuring."

"I suppose you will let me know when you have quite made up your mind about it," Breed suggested with a trace of sarcasm.

"Yes," admitted Phillip calmly.

Breed frowned. "Don't get too high-handed, young man," he warned. "Remember that, after all, I am providing the weight which gives our plans momentum."

"Mr. Breed," said Phillip, rising, "suppose, as it would be certain to come up again, that we dispose of this phase of the matter at once. Any time you object to my methods tell me to go, and it won't require your private militia to put me out of the grounds. I was worth two and a half million dollars when I came to you, and this you can not take from me. I am here with you, however, because I want to use the enormous power of your money for purposes of my own. Aside from these purposes, which are not a matter of life and death to me, I assure you, I don't need you or your money."

Breed looked at him a moment, then lay back in his chair and rubbed his hands together and

chuckled until it threw him into a fit of coughing. "And in the meantime," he gasped, struggling for breath, "I suppose you intend to render value received. Go ahead, my boy, and see who gets the most out of it. I wouldn't part with you for anything. This two million and a half of yours, by the way; is it in cash?"

"No," replied Phillip; "it is in highly profitable oil-, coal-, and iron-lands, into the extension of which my profits are going as fast as I am making them. I hypothecated them in order to get in on our Stock Exchange deal, but immediately removed that encumbrance as soon as the deal was concluded. So far as the cash is concerned, I would rather you should have it than I; it has so much more weight when thrown into one pile."

Again Henry Breed lay back and chuckled, and he followed Phillip out of the room with extremely friendly eyes.

CHAPTER XII

A MAD TWILIGHT, IN WHICH SEVERAL PEOPLE
RETURN TO BRUTAL FIRST PRINCIPLES

MRS. RENSSELAER, always drowsy after a meal, and always fighting off that drowsiness for reasons not entirely unconnected with embonpoint, sat upon the balcony outside her own apartments, after the early dinner customary at Forest Lakes. The level rays of the low-lying sun shot long streams of red light through the trees. The hush of coming twilight was in the air, and the cries of the sleepy birds as, swift winged, they sought their nests, gave Mrs. Rensselaer the fight of her existence to keep awake.

A loud guffaw, ending in a shrill falsetto and echoed by a high soprano laugh, rich and mellow, aroused her. From the rear of the house emerged black Sam and Lucy, the colored kitchen-maid, who cut across from the kitchen-grounds and started up the northwest path, pushing each other, dancing and cavorting over the roadway like a pair of nervous monkeys, as Mrs. Rensselaer expressed it to herself. Such loose care of the servants was most repre-

hensible in Mrs. Rensselaer's mind, and she meant to speak sharply to the housekeeper about it. She was highly indignant that they should be allowed to wander off in that way. She had half a notion to call to them, and would have done so except for her distaste of personal conflict with such animals.

New voices claimed her attention and awakened her still more. She leaned forward and peered over the edge of the balcony. Young Rensselaer and Elsie White came strolling from toward the back of the house, talking quite earnestly, and struck out into the southwest roadway. Mrs. Rensselaer stiffened. It was perfectly disgraceful of Herbert so far to forget his station in life. There was no telling what influence this designing young person might bring to bear upon him! If Herbert had not intelligence enough to watch out for himself, some one ought to look after him. The boy was throwing away the chance of a lifetime, here under the same roof with the richest girl in the world.

Still new voices smote upon her ear. From the front porch Phillip and Lillian stepped down and strode up the northwest path, Lillian clinging to Phillip's arm and chattering volubly, even excitedly. Mrs. Rensselaer, estimable lady, arose at once.

"How indiscreet!" she murmured. "I must see that the dear child is instantly chaperoned."

She went quickly down the stairs, hastily selected

a light wrap from the hall-tree, and hurried out. To her annoyance, however, she caught the lace of her wrap in the catch of the screen-door, and was occupied some minutes in releasing it. When she had finally loosed herself, Lillian and Phillip had so complete a start of her that they were lost to view. For perhaps twenty minutes she followed them, marveling how swiftly the twilight had settled down, and beginning to feel an eeriness which made its first impression in compelling her to draw her wrap more closely about her. She was just upon the point of turning back, torn between her fear and her desire to prevent Phillip and Lillian from coming to some understanding that might destroy her hopes for her nephew, when, at a turn in the road, she saw them under the dim avenue of trees, just ahead of her.

Even as she looked she saw Lillian suddenly turn and throw her arms about Phillip. For a moment she stopped to gasp, and then hurried on with an intention born of anger. What had really happened was that Lillian had stepped upon a loose, round stone and had slightly turned her foot. Instantly she had wheeled and clutched at Phillip for support, clasping him by the arm and throwing the other up over his shoulder; and then, the wrenched ankle forgotten, she had clung to him in ecstasy for a full

moment which seemed an age. The catch in her voice had become a single sob.

When Mrs. Rensselaer reached them she found Phillip erect. He had done no more than to clasp Lillian as he might to steady her, but he was pale and trembling, though this she could not see in the darkness.

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Rensselaer coldly; "I seem to be interrupting something of an entirely personal nature."

"Appearances are deceitful," replied Phillip, laughing, and concealing the tremulousness of his voice as best he could. "I fancy that Miss Lillian has sprained her ankle, and I think that she is faint."

"If Miss Lillian were to choose less dim paths for her strolls she would not be in such danger," quoth Mrs. Rensselaer dryly. "As her chaperon, I must ask both of you to be a little more circumspect in the future; and as her friend, I must return with her to the house, and see what we can do for that sprained ankle. Come with me, Lillian."

She led the girl away unresisting. Her limp was slight, but she tottered as she walked; her hand, as Mrs. Rensselaer took it and put it in her arm, was flaccid and cold with moisture, and for the first time in her life she obeyed every suggestion of Mrs. Rensselaer's as if she had been a child. Mrs.

Rensselaer looked back, expecting Phillip to come with them and offer to assist Lillian home, but he stood in the same spot, numbed, not even thinking. His mind was a blank except for the tumult of emotions that seethed within him.

He had a rude awakening from this attitude. Mrs. Rensselaer and Lillian had no sooner turned the bend in the road than a tall, gaunt form sprang from among the shrubbery at the roadside. Strong, lank hands clutched Phillip by the shoulders and shook him, and a lean face with prominent cheekbones confronted his own closely, while a pair of eyes, phosphorescent in the dimness, like a cat's, blazed into his.

"Let her alone!" hissed the voice of Blagg. "You don't care for her. Let her alone!"

"Take your hands from my shoulders!" commanded Phillip firmly, offering as yet no resistance except in his tenseness of muscle.

"Let her alone, I say!" repeated Blagg fiercely, and, spasmodically tightening his clutch, he once more tried to shake Phillip, but this time shook his own frailer body; for Phillip had stiffened himself.

"I'll give you just one more second of warning," cautioned Phillip, drawing up his arms and clenching his fists.

Neither one had time for parley, however, for a huge black shape hurled itself upon Blagg, like a

whirlwind, huge black fingers seized him by the throat, and a huge black body bore him to the ground. There was a rattle in Blagg's throat; above his face was bent the face of big Sam, distorted almost out of all semblance to humanity, and he was snarling like a wild beast, displaying huge yellow teeth; his eyes had suddenly gone bloodshot, and he was shaking his head from side to side, as the fingers of his enormous hands kneaded themselves more and more into the throat of Blagg.

The whole thing had occupied but an instant, and yet there was such imminent danger that Kelvin sprang forward in fright.

"Sam!" he cried. "Sam! Sam! Sam!" he repeated over and over, shouting and screaming it into his ear, grabbing his shoulders and pulling him back; but Sam neither felt nor heard. In desperation, to save Blagg's life, Phillip hauled back and gave the negro a resounding kick in the side. With a loud aspirated "Huh!" Sam suddenly relaxed, but still his heavy body hung poised over that of Blagg, with his weight upon the man's throat; now, however, it was no task for Kelvin, stooping down, to topple Sam over. As he did so Lucy came flying from the hillside, and, bending over Sam, let loose upon Kelvin such a flood of vituperation as he had never heard before, at the same time pillowing Sam's head upon her arm. Sam, recovering himself

with marvelous quickness, stopped her flow of language by the simple expedient of clapping a broad palm over her mouth and holding her head against that gag by pressing his other hand at the back of her neck; and for once, Lucy, as she scrambled to her feet, taken by surprise in the quick succession of events, was overcome and had no words.

Phillip, in the meantime, had bent over Blagg and loosened his collar, and was fanning him. "Sam," said he sharply, "there is a spring down there in the ravine; hurry and get some water in your hat."

"Ah hope Ah ain't done gone an' done no damage to 'im, Mistuh Phillip," said Sam contritely. "Ah suah done fohgot when to leave go; but Ah jes' cain' stan' to see no one tetch yo', Mistuh Phillip."

"Hurry and get that water," ordered Phillip. "Remember, Sam, next time, to give me a chance to handle my own difficulties."

"Yas, sah," said Sam as he plunged over the bank.

He brought water, but it took some time to revive Blagg. When he rose to his feet there was a little trickle of blood running from the corner of his mouth, and Phillip offered him a handkerchief.

"Never mind," said Blagg, waving it away. He was quite himself, and refused any assistance. He started toward the house, wiping his lips with his

own handkerchief and feeling his neck. He staggered for a few paces, then squared his shoulders and walked sturdily away.

Phillip looked at Sam and Lucy, standing together abashed before him, with huge distaste. "We're a pack of wildcats," he said. "But, after all," and he looked about him at the darkening woods, "we are in the right place for it. Back to nature, back to savagery!"

CHAPTER XIII

SUMNER ROLLINS ACCEPTS THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE LARGEST EMPIRE IN THE WORLD

PHILLIP having seen Rollins safely away, walked into Breed's study confidently the next morning. "It is going to cost you something to get those proxies, whether you attempt your impossible plan of subsidizing the newspapers or whether you go about it in some other way," he declared.

"I am quite willing that it should," replied Breed. "I expect it to cost me a great many millions, even if a plan can be devised by which we can manage it."

"I can't tell you how to subsidize the newspapers, but I know how to subsidize the public," said Phillip with a smile, and handed Breed a sheet of paper.

Breed glanced at it and elevated his eyebrows, then he whistled. "This is going to cost an enormous amount of money," he declared.

"It would seem so at first," admitted Phillip; "but here are the figures," and he handed Breed another sheet of paper.

Breed studied this latter long and earnestly, then

he rose and gave Kelvin his hand. "Young man," he exclaimed, "if Heaven had only blessed me with a son or a grandson like you!"

"It is a pity that your granddaughter was not born a boy," suggested Phillip.

Breed shook his head and sighed. "It is a gift that she was not," he replied. "That is the only family luck for which I have to be thankful. No human being susceptible to emotion or sentiment can ever rise to great achievement!"

Phillip colored slightly, and Breed's sharp eyes caught the flush. He raised a warning finger.

"Remember, young man," said he, "that it is in youth these things must be fought. Were it not for that, old age would have no chance in this world for preferment. In the meantime, go ahead with your scheme of subsidy. At what time does your plan include making the attempt for proxies?"

"Within two weeks," replied Kelvin. "If you will excuse me I will put this on the wire at once."

With some curiosity, remembering the events of the night before, he went into Blagg's room. Blagg looked up as if nothing had ever happened, though the effort was hard to convey in view of the black-and-blue marks on his neck.

"Good morning," said Kelvin, equally willing to ignore what was finished. "Here is some stuff I wish to get off."

Blagg looked it over, then read it more carefully and nodded his head. "This is your scheme," he declared familiarly. "Of course there is an ulterior motive behind it, but even so, this is an act that will work real good to the people, and it will operate in Breed's favor when the day of accounting comes."

"The day of accounting?" repeated Phillip.

"Yes," replied Blagg. "There is always a day of reckoning, isn't there?"

"Possibly," agreed Phillip dryly. "In the meantime, you might get the message away."

He was about to leave the room, when Blagg called to him:

"By the way, Mr. Kelvin, I hope you will not hold last night too much against me. We had some wine at dinner in the housekeeper's dining-room, and I broke my rule and drank some of it. It affects me too strongly. I shall have to leave it alone. I am very sorry that atrocious occurrence happened."

"So am I," agreed Phillip. "Since you had the worst of the bargain, however, I shall not exact any painful apologies."

Blagg made a wry face. Whether it was a smile or not, Phillip could not tell, but he smiled to himself as he returned to his own office. The excuse that Blagg had been drinking was too transparent

for credence, nor could he comprehend the passions which had led the operator so thoroughly to lose his balance. Without self-urged emotions himself, to any appreciable degree, he could not understand them in others, but nevertheless he was resolved that Blagg should have no more cause for such insane exhibitions; this not because of Blagg, but because of himself. The incident of the night before had shown him that he had a trace of weakness which must be guarded, if he was to carry out the limitless ambition that was in his mind.

For the ensuing month there was a new order of things. Phillip had never sought Lillian, but now he avoided her persistently. Young Rensselaer, having passed some bad half-hours with his aunt, compromised for the sake of peace, and devoted himself to Lillian, who made matters easy for him had he really desired to follow out his aunt's wishes, for she strove now to make Phillip jealous. She was wasting her time in that effort, for Phillip had in hand what were to him much graver matters.

The propaganda he had put forth soon began to bear results. Breed would not say how well pleased he was with the outcome as clippings began to pour in from the bureau of his New Jersey offices, but secretly he was delighted, and daily he went down into the vault and gloated over the money that was there. Meanwhile Phillip delved

into fresh statistics, covering wider and still wider plans of which Breed knew nothing — and Blagg practised upon his combination lock!

The name of Breed was now upon every lip. It had always been, for that matter, but in terms of execration. Now that sentiment was tempered. There were thousands of columns of editorials printed about him and his great philanthropic movement. Fully half the papers declared that he had an ulterior motive; a large number of them found the true one, and lost no time in pointing it out with the utmost scorn; but the great fact remained that the boon which he had promised the people had gone into immediate effect, and that every man in the United States reaped an immediate and direct benefit. A complete revulsion of feeling toward Breed set in. In the customary haste with which the American public turns upon its own opinions, Breed became a saint overnight: in his old age he had developed a large heart; he was bent upon making his peace with his Creator; he was now restoring to the public a part of the inheritance of which he had so enormously robbed it; he was really, at bottom, and always had been, a great and good and generous man! Were not the poor, as well as the rich, now his daily beneficiaries?

Phillip's plan had been very simple. It was

merely the issuance to the newspapers of this proclamation:

Beginning to-morrow, the price of bread, of the same weight and quality as heretofore, will be reduced, throughout the United States, from five to four cents a loaf. This price will continue until a committee, to be selected by the public, can determine from my books and records the actual cost of bread delivered to the consumer. Immediately upon that investigation bread will be provided at actual cost. I have made my fortune, and desire no more. From this day on, my bread-factories shall be run in the interest of the public alone.

HENRY BREED.

There it was — bread at cost! It was the most tremendous sensation that had ever been given space in the papers since Breed had completed his consolidation of all the cereal food industries in the United States. No argument could hold against that. It was an argument which was additionally clenched every time a man bought six loaves of bread for a quarter and received a penny in change.

At exactly the psychological moment Phillip launched his campaign for the control of railroad stocks, and for thirty days there waged the great

battle of the proxies, a battle no less bitter because silent, no less ferocious because unseen, no less relentless because there was no bloodshed.

The forces allied with Rollins themselves attempted publicity. They sent out appeal after appeal to the conservative investors, that enormous army of minor stock-holders who were the real controlling interest, if they once could be massed, of all the roads; they sent arguments, statistics, and, finally, broadside after broadside of attacks, personal and economic, dignified and scurrilous, against Breed. But against their publicity Breed had put an enormous practical benefit; against their appeals he had put an enormous practical benefit; against their attacks he had put an enormous practical benefit; and the tide of public favor, springing not from the printed pages of the morning and afternoon papers, but from lip to lip, set in so strongly in his direction that it reached every investor. Bread at four cents! Later at cost!

To the victor belongs the spoils, and the spoils of this war were the proxies. Breed got the proxies, and through personal representatives from his New Jersey offices he walked into one meeting after another with a majority of stock. He had succeeded, through Kelvin, in that apparently impossible dream of every railroad man since Stephenson invented the steam-engine — the concentration of

every railroad in the United States under one management. Then he sent for Rollins.

"Well, I kept my word," said Breed. "I told you I meant to have control of every mile of railroad in the United States, and now I have it. I have sent for you to take over their management."

Rollins was pale, and there were dark rings under his eyes. "I don't know if I want it. There is only one condition under which I could accept, and it would be folly in me to expect you to grant me that."

"You might mention it," observed Breed dryly.

"The condition is that I may do as I see fit, may work absolutely unhampered. Man," he suddenly burst forth, "you don't know how many years I have dreamed of this! It has been the ambition of my life to put this great public utility upon the plane of its proper relation to the public."

"That is my own dream," Breed declared.

Rollins shrugged his shoulders incredulously.

"You don't believe it?" inquired Breed.

"I find belief difficult," replied Rollins. "Moreover, I had imagined that Mr. Kelvin here was to have some say in the matter of management."

Breed smiled and looked at Phillip. "I have larger work for him," he said.

"Larger!" exclaimed Rollins. "Can there be anything bigger than to combine a quarter of a

million miles of railroad, every foot of transportation highway in the United States, under one economic head, eliminating graft and waste and putting them all upon a working basis of legitimate profit and public safety? ”

Breed waved his hand. “ Much larger,” said he. “ This is only an incident. I wish you would tell me just what reforms you propose instituting, Mr. Rollins.”

“ First of all,” said Rollins earnestly, reassured, “ I would secure for every through line one-hundred-and-twenty-pound, open-hearth steel rails, made in new mills from larger ingots, with the cones of impurity cast entirely aside and the compact residue kneaded into a proper consistency by an entirely new system of rolls. There are other things that need to be done — the establishment of perfect block systems, of automatic brakes and other accident-preventing devices, and the abolition of grade crossings — but the main matter of public safety rests in perfect rails. Ten years ago I tried to fight this proposition, and I nearly succeeded. The Tallahassee Iron and Coal Company offered to make open-hearth rails to my specifications. They had the ore, the process, and the nucleus of the mills; *but* they would have had a monopoly. They would either have driven the Unified Steel Corporation out of the business, or have compelled them to

adopt the open-hearth process, the only present process of manufacture which produces steel without dangerous brittleness. The Unified Steel Corporation found that to control the stock of the Tallahassee Iron and Coal Company was much cheaper and more profitable than to spend the needed millions in reëquipping their plant, and it was a then high government official who enabled them to gain control by refusing a needed federal injunction. That official, through this one act, was directly responsible for the loss of a hundred thousand lives."

"Your first step, then, I suppose, would be to begin a fight on the Unified Steel Corporation," observed Breed.

"That, in a nutshell, is our problem," declared Rollins.

"Your problem is already solved, Mr. Rollins," said Kelvin with a smile. "Mr. Breed's control of the railroads has left the Unified Steel Corporation high and dry. The panic compelled even them to release stock which would have hampered us had they been able to hold it. They know that they are beaten, for if they do not produce the precise product which we want they know that we will refuse them not only patronage, but transportation. Moreover, we have secured entire control of the Iroquois Iron Range; and no matter what the Unified Steel Corporation does, we shall set up our own

rolling-mills and make rails by our own process, from our own ore. The establishment of these mills, in the way you want them, and the making of steel rails according to your own specifications, would probably be your first move."

"But the program will be left entirely to your own discretion," interrupted Breed. "You shall have a contract for one year, renewable for ten years if your preliminary steps meet with my approval."

"Allow me to understand," said Rollins. "In that year I am to be absolutely without interference in any way?"

"With two exceptions," replied Breed. "I want a private rebate on all shipments of bread or cereal stuffs. Next, here is a list of names. These men are not to be employed in any capacity nor benefited in any way."

Rollins looked over the list and smiled. "There isn't a man here whom I would lift a finger to save. There is not a man in that list but has had an interest in a car company, a coupler company, a brake company, a locomotive-tire company, or some other manufacturing concern which furnished supplies to his own railroad at enormous prices. There is to be no graft in the new construction."

"Certainly not!" agreed Breed. "These roads must be conducted for legitimate profit and public

safety. If there is any graft I want it myself; and I am content to take dividends for mine."

Rollins shrugged his shoulders. "That is a matter for your directorate. I don't want to be bothered with that part of the financing."

"Then go ahead," said Breed. "For one year you are the absolute dictator of the largest empire in the world, the combined railroads of the United States."

"Will you put that in writing?" asked Rollins. Breed looked at Kelvin.

"It is already written," said the latter, and from his desk he took a contract, confined to one sheet of paper, which he handed to Rollins.

That gentleman took the paper, read it over, and caught his breath. "It is a generous salary," he admitted; "more generous than I should have dared to ask for."

"Huh! I am saving money on it," declared Breed. "It's only a portion of a thousand fancy salaries that I expect you to stop at once."

Rollins nodded his head in comprehension. "I will take great pleasure in stopping a few of them."

Breed rubbed his hands slowly together in satisfaction. "As soon as you like," he returned. "Mr. Kelvin will show you his very clever plan for dispensing with interstate-commerce- and anti-combination-law interference, and will make you at

home as a part of our official family at Forest Lakes. Of course you will have offices wherever you like, but you will have a personal office here, too, with such assistance as you need, that you can visit when necessary. I, myself, do not intend to go to the city any more."

Kelvin conducted Rollins to a room, next to his own, that had been fitted with a commodious desk and all that should go with it. It was the first time Phillip had been in this apartment. When he had first come to Forest Lakes he had wondered to find, in this new wing of the building, an office so perfectly equipped as his own. He had noticed no preparations in the past few weeks, and yet here was another office equipped with every needful appointment. Rollins sat upon the desk and looked about him smilingly.

"Looks fairly complete, doesn't it? Did you have a hand in this?"

"No," said Kelvin, puzzled and piqued as well. "It has been arranged for a long time, I think. Mr. Breed has probably been planning to make Forest Lakes the capital of New York City."

"Perhaps the capital of the United States," retorted Rollins, smiling in answer to the jest. "Who knows? He has a good start. He has paid a lot of attention to detail, too. Everything is complete now except for a secretary," and idly he

touched one of the row of buttons along the right-hand edge of his desk, the one marked "Secretary."

Instantly the door of the adjoining room opened, and a sober-faced and non-committal-looking young man, ruddy-cheeked and clean-eyed and tow-headed, walked in, note-book in hand.

"Hello," said Rollins. "Who are you?"

"I am your secretary, sir. I came last night. My name is Jens Nelson."

"Swedish, eh?" guessed Rollins.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Nelson. "I am a graduate of the Minnesota Technical College, founded by Mr. Breed, and am one of his scholarship men."

Rollins smiled over the naïveté of this admission. It was quite evident that he had, as his most intimate man of affairs, a youth who owed so strong an allegiance to Breed that he could never be won to allegiance to any one else. Oh, well; he welcomed such espionage. His acts were going to bear inspection; only, he would leave Mr. Nelson in charge of the seldom-visited Forest Lakes headquarters.

"All right, Mr. Nelson," said he. "You have a telegraph operator here, I believe, Mr. Kelvin."

"Wireless," amended Phillip.

Rollins glanced at his row of buttons and nodded his head. "I see," said he, "but I was not sure that it was yet in operation. Mr. Nelson, you may take these Marconigrams," and without any hesita-

tion he began dictating peremptory discharges to a long list of railroad officials.

Thus set in the new empire — the empire of the iron highways; an empire which held under its absolute control the commercial destinies of the nation; an empire more powerful than any ever conceived by man; an empire which could build a city or could isolate one from the world, which could ruin a business or wax it fat, like a gourd upon its vine; against whose edict there could be no appeal; to whose progress there could be no resistance; whose tentacles were fastened upon every city and village and hamlet, upon every farm and mine and forest, upon every capitalist, merchant, farmer, and laborer in the United States; and those powerful tentacles could either suck the life-blood from all these municipalities, institutions, and men, or could feed them. It was a reign that began peacefully and quietly as the stern Rollins, with a smile, dispossessed half a thousand men from their fat sinecures; but as he worked, Henry Breed, attended by Doctor Zelphan and carrying a bundle of golf-sticks, stopped in the door a moment.

“By the way, Rollins,” said he, “there is only one personal provision I wish to make, and that must be seen to from the first. I want my dividends all in cash. Nothing else, understand; just cash!”

CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTOR ZELPHAN PENETRATES THE BILLION DOLLAR VAULT AND INDULGES IN WRATH

THE only portion of Doctor Zelphan's countenance visible through his wealth of red beard and mustache was his nose, and that portion was highly inflamed, for the doctor was angry. Three times he paced the length of the broad front porch, and each time he passed the open hallway door he looked in and scowled. Finally, with sudden determination, he was about to enter, when he saw striding with a free step, from around a clump of bushes that bordered a curve in the main driveway, the familiar figure of Sumner Rollins. Though still in an ill humor, he waited for Rollins, and peered at that gentleman through his thick spectacles with as pleasant an expression as he could assume under the circumstances.

"Glorious morning," began Rollins as he neared the steps.

He was in particularly good trim after an absence of some months, and though he had just

walked a matter of six miles or more, except for the dust on his shoes he was as precise and clean, with his white tie and freshly pressed clothing, as if he had just come from his apartments.

"I came down rather unexpectedly," he went on, as he kicked his shoes against the bottom step and walked up on the porch. "The air was so deliciously invigorating when I got off at the station that I could not resist walking over."

The doctor had shaken hands with Rollins more genially than he had thought for the moment to be within his range of feeling, for, after all, he liked Rollins. "Walking is good for you," he said. "You have a long life before you if you will just watch your liver. That's your weak spot."

"So I have been told," replied Rollins, laughing, as they started to go in. "I suppose Kelvin's in his office?"

"No," said the doctor rather shortly, "Mr. Kelvin is not in his office. He is out with Mrs. Rensselaer and young Rensselaer and Miss Breed, *fishing!*" There was no explaining the contempt with which Doctor Zelphan jerked out that last word. "*Fishing!*" he repeated with the utmost scorn. "Fishing in a private lake for pet fish that come up to be fed when they are called!"

"It doesn't sound much like sport," confessed

Rollins; "but after all, I envy them. Where is Mr. Breed?"

Again the frown returned that all the morning had crossed Doctor Zelphan's brow. "I don't know," he snapped; "but he is some place about the house. I'll find him for you."

"There's no hurry," returned Rollins easily. "If you see either Mr. Kelvin or Mr. Breed before I get word to them kindly say that I am here."

"I'm going to hunt Mr. Breed anyhow," declared Zelphan savagely, and following Rollins into the hall he stepped into Henry Breed's dim old library, slamming the door behind him. Rollins glanced at the door with a laugh as he started up the broad stairway. Doctor Zelphan and his irascibility had always amused him. Going back through the upper hall, Rollins stopped for a moment in Blagg's room, where the wireless operator sat idly at his instrument, the greenish light giving to his gaunt features a particularly deathlike ghastliness, especially as the man sat perfectly motionless with his eyes upturned to the ceiling.

"Gad, Blagg! I wish you would put pink glass around those tubes!" exclaimed Rollins with an involuntary shudder. "That whole tableau suggests the resurrection morn, with you headed in the wrong direction."

"I'll be headed with the crowd, then," returned Blagg; "but I am afraid we won't have your company if you keep on receiving this kind of protests from this sort of people," and he handed Rollins two wireless messages which the latter read with a passing frown. One was signed by the head of an immense packing-house in Chicago, the other by the president of the largest fruit-shipping company on the western coast. To both he dictated the same curt reply:

"Discussion positively closed."

Blagg read the answers with a grim smile. "Allow me to congratulate you," said he. "You may not know it, but you are doing splendid preliminary work for the social equity cause."

"The preliminary work?" repeated Rollins. "How do you think it will be finished?"

"In violence," returned Blagg with a darkening brow.

Rollins shrugged his shoulders. "Violent conversation, largely, I guess," he rejoined.

Blagg's eyes snapped. "Deeds!" he declared. "Let inequality and oppression go on for but a short time more, and there will be such a revolt from the darker depths of this country as not even France has ever known. There exists, even now, a close organization of the under-dogs who are ready at a

word to rise and undo the wrongs to which justice has grown blind."

"You seem to know a lot about it," commented Rollins.

Blagg calmed down his excitement with an effort. "I keep fairly well posted," said he. "Among other things I know that there is a branch of that organization which needs just such men as you."

"I am rather busy as it is," returned Rollins dryly, and walked over to his own office. He had not been in it for months; he had never occupied it for more than two days at a time, and yet, when he pushed the button upon his desk for his secretary, that white-haired and self-contained young man walked in from the adjoining apartment, note-book in hand, as commonplacely as if this were the beginning of the regular morning grind.

"Have you prepared the data I asked you to get ready, Nelson?" inquired Rollins.

"Yes, sir," replied Nelson. He walked across to a filing-cabinet, brought from it a drawer which he set upon Rollins' desk and lifted up the spring. Rollins leafed through the indexed flaps, beneath which, very carefully arranged, were displayed the mileage distances, by various routes, between all important points in the United States, with the percentage of grade resistance figured in units, these,

compounded with the mileage, showing the ultimate hauling resistance. It had been a tremendous task; it was neatly and perfectly accomplished; yet Nelson showed neither elation nor diffidence.

"This is splendidly done," observed Rollins after a long interval of careful inspection.

"Thank you," said Nelson quietly.

Rollins glanced up at him with puzzled curiosity. He saw nothing but an absolutely placid and expressionless face. "That will do just now," said he with a slight frown; and Jens walked composedly into his own room, a fathomless enigma to Rollins.

In the meantime, Doctor Zelphan, crossing the library, paused before the door at the far side of the fireplace, and, after a moment of frowning hesitation, resolutely thrust open the door and entered. To his surprise Henry Breed was not there. For a moment he stood nonplussed. He knew that Breed had not gone out into the grounds, because he had watched for him, and he had made a through search of the house. He gazed around the room curiously. It had once been fitted up as a bedroom, and, indeed, a small iron bed, unused except for noonday naps, still stood in one corner. The main use of the room, however, was as an adjunct to the library. Here Breed had a small private desk; and here, let into the wall where the fireplace should have been, was a small safe.

In the corner of the room, on the same side as the safe, a door stood open, and Zelphan, with an angry determination to see everything here, approached that closet. Its rear wall was hung with clothing, a golf-outfit and such minor garments as Breed might wish to change during the daytime; but the closet struck Zelphan as of an odd shape, being much deeper at one end than the other. He put his hand upon the rear wall at the deeper side, and it yielded to his touch, swinging backward into a narrow space from which came a damp odor and a faint gleam of light.

"So," said Doctor Zelphan aloud, and immediately he squeezed back into the narrow space and descended the two flights of narrow stairs to the big vault, the existence of which he had never even suspected. In the center of the vault, with the light from a cluster of electric bulbs gleaming down upon his bald head, with one of the many iron drawers upon his knees, and with an old, well-thumbed Bible on the bench at his side, sat Henry Breed. In his hands was a package of the paper money with which the drawer was filled, and he was gazing, rapt, at the opposite side of the vault. He turned without surprise toward the familiar figure of Doctor Zelphan, and chuckled as he patted the drawer.

"This is the first row on all that side to be filled," said he. "I began at the lower corner there. All

the other rows are empty, but they'll fill up; they'll fill up;" and he nodded his head in satisfaction. "Those other sides were filled by the bread business, but this is railroad dividends, in cash, solid cash!"

Doctor Zelphan was looking about him in amazement. "There must be millions here!" he gasped.

"Millions?" cackled Breed, his wrinkled old face breaking into a leathery smile. "There's over a billion and a half —"

Suddenly, as he looked at the doctor, he stopped and began to tremble. It had just dawned upon him that this was the first time Zelphan had ever visited this vault; indeed, the first time that he had even known about it. "How did you come here?" he cried. "You were told that that little room upstairs was my strictly private study, that I wished no one to come into it."

"Exactly," agreed Zelphan dryly; "but now that I have found the way, I am coming whenever you do, or I am not going to stay at Forest Lakes."

"Don't go away, Doctor!" pleaded Breed in sudden fright. "Don't leave me. When you arrived I was a nervous wreck, but since you came I have been able to do a lot of work; good work, splendid work!"

He had laid his hand appealingly upon the doctor's arm. Zelphan shook it off roughly.

"That's because you at first did what I told you;

but of late you've grown careless. You give me the slip every morning now, and I can't find you. When you should be out in the fresh air you are down here in this unhealthy atmosphere with unhealthy thoughts, counting money; not the money that you have, but the money you expect to make. I knew that you had torn yourself to pieces in building up your immense bread and cereal monopoly, but I hadn't the slightest idea that you were a mere miser."

That word seemed to restore Breed to his equilibrium, for he laughed quite naturally, replaced the package of bills in the drawer, walked over to the corner of the vault, and slid the drawer into place. "A miser, Doctor," he smilingly expostulated, "is a man who hoards his money for its own sake. He never uses it for pleasure or comfort, he never even puts it to work; but this money of mine, by the mere fact of its being here, is a tremendous dynamo, by the mighty current of which I can sway almost the entire social and economic universe. To its own good, to its own good!" he hastily added. "With it, when duly increased, I can right great wrongs, change unjust laws, destroy and build anew entire civilizations, shatter and re-create governments! Think, Doctor! Handled with my experience and the genius of young Kelvin, this money has already bankrupted nearly every enemy I had in the world,

destroyed the iniquity of the New York Stock Exchange, and given me absolute control of every mile of railroad in the United States. No miser's money could have done that."

"Incidentally," observed Zelphan, "several hundred thousand people were thrown out of work, a thousand or so starved to death, a few hundred committed suicide, and other hundreds deserted their families."

"For their iniquities the Lord shall bring suffering upon His people," solemnly declared Breed, and reached down a nervous hand for his Bible. "Through fire shall they pass to their purification, and mine is the appointed hand!"

Zelphan looked at him sternly. "I want you to come out of this place, at once, and stay out," he ordered.

"No, no!" objected Breed nervously. "No! I must come in every day, Doctor — just a little while."

"Yes, I suppose you must," admitted Zelphan, studying the matter in grave silence for a moment. "I'll give you thirty minutes every day; but some one must be with you."

"My granddaughter usually comes with me," explained Breed. "She is the only one, besides myself, who knows the combination to these locks; and only we four, Lillian and Kelvin and you and I,

know of its existence. You must guard this secret well, Zelphan."

"No danger of my telling it," scorned the doctor. "I don't want to ruin any human soul with the knowledge that all this money is here, guarded only by iron bolts and your handful of armed guards. There's a curse on the stuff. More than enough to live on has never done any one any good. Look at yourself."

"What is the matter with me?" asked Breed quickly.

"Oh, nothing," said Zelphan quietly; "only you are losing your mind, that is all," and his glance strayed for an instant to the Bible which Breed held clasped beneath his arm. "If you don't keep away from this silent brooding you'll be a jibbering idiot in less than a year; and I shall not remain here to take the blame for it. Unless you obey me implicitly I shall leave you. I had a notion to do so this morning, but Mr. Rollins came, and I changed my mind."

"Rollins!" exclaimed Breed, his fear vanishing and his shrewdness returning as if by magic. "Is he here? Good! I must see him at once," and he hurried out of the vault, waiting impatiently for Zelphan to follow him.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," asserted Zelphan, closing the door after him.

“Not see Rollins? Nonsense!” exclaimed Breed as he threw the bolt and touched the button to turn out the light. “This is important. I *must* see Rollins.”

“Important or not, you are coming out with me for a half-hour’s walk before you see any one.”

“Then you *may* go!” declared Breed, turning on him with sudden senile fury. “Leave Forest Lakes as soon as you like; go now!”

“I’ll not do that either,” announced Zelphan flatly. “I’m interested now, and I intend to remain.”

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. RENSSELAER, ATTEMPTING TO AROUSE
FAMILY PRIDE IN HERBERT, IS SHOCKED.

KELVIN, in the bow of the boat, looked at his watch and began reeling in his line. "I am sorry, but I shall have to leave you," said he. "I must be back at the office in fifteen minutes."

"What's your hurry?" asked young Rensselaer. "One would think there was a time-recording clock waiting to stamp your morning ticket."

Kelvin laughed. "The worst part of loafing is that a loafer wants to convert everybody else to his mode of life," he retorted. "You're not much like the Bar X Bert I used to know in the old cow-punching days, nor even the Herbert Rensselaer who used to make a flying wedge of himself and buck his way to the center of the most agitated group on the floor of the Stock Exchange."

"No," returned Rensselaer, making a long cast so perfectly that it scarcely jarred the boat. "I have seen the folly of my youth. When, without

effort, I can enjoy an estate like Forest Lakes and the society of its gracious and charming hostesses," and he bowed extravagantly to the two ladies, whereupon his aunt beamed upon him and Lillian Breed laughed and shrugged her shoulders, "why should I toil?"

Phillip's hook caught on the oar-lock, and he leaned forward to disengage it. Lillian, sitting just in front of him, deliberately leaned back, though with a pretense of helping him, until her rounded shoulder touched his cheek. She held it there, and with a thrill he became acutely conscious of the warmth of the contact.

"Don't go," she said, sinking her voice ever so little below its ordinary conversational tone.

Phillip suddenly drew his cheek away from that insidious touch, angry with himself that, until reason came to his aid, his blood had leaped to the unspoken call.

The calm, even voice of Mrs. Rensselaer, who was finding the task of taming the wild Lillian for a social campaign an endless one, broke in upon his momentary confusion. "Lillian, you must remember that Mr. Kelvin's sense of duty is never at fault."

Kelvin winced slightly at that remark.

"Kelvin's sense of duty is an awe-inspiring and even a fatiguing thing," commented Herbert, fas-

tening his line to the gunwale of the boat and languidly picking up the oars. "Heave anchor! Ahoy! Also avast and belay!"

There was no more languidness in him, however, from the first dip of his oars in the water. Mrs. Rensselaer, sitting in the prow, admired mightily the play of his biceps and the rise and fall of his broad shoulders as he spun the boat swiftly and easily to the shore. Herbert deftly shifted his oars, sprang out at the side, helped his aunt from the boat and drew it farther up on the beach, then offered his hand to Lillian, who, barely touching it, poised herself upon the gunwale and sprang, with a splendid muscular effort, far up the bank. As Kelvin stepped out he once more looked at his watch.

"You will pardon me if I hurry on?" he said.

"Oh, we are all going," returned Lillian. "It's too late for the fish to bite any more, anyhow."

Kelvin was already passing her. The bank was very steep at this point, and, although impatient for more than one reason, of necessity he offered to help her. She at once took his arm and hung heavily upon it. Near the top she slipped, and he was compelled to throw his arm hastily about her. She let her shoulders rest limply back in his embrace, and allowed him to drag her dead weight up over the little rise; and Kelvin almost cursed him-

self aloud, for again he had found that contact more than pleasurable. Impatient with both her and himself, he swung on, as soon as they struck the level roadway, at a rapid pace, but the girl kept abreast of him with a smooth, even stride that he could not help but admire. This thought crossing his mind, he glanced down at her, as, chatting gaily on a score of nothings, she swung along beside him beneath the arched trees of the beautiful driveway through the woods. Her black hair was waved low about her oval face; her dark eyes were agleam with vivacity; her cheeks, from the fresh morning air and the exercise, wore the glow of a damask rose; her supple, well-rounded figure moved with a grace that was almost feline; her gown, elaborate in the artfulness of its construction, though simple to his masculine eyes, cast itself in the breeze into lines of infinite enticement. "After all —" Phillip brought himself back to the future with a jerk. "No entanglements with women." That had been the one warning motto he had set for himself, and he must observe it if he would accomplish his boundless ambitions. It had been easy so far, but here, in the isolation of Forest Lakes, in spite of himself thrown much into the company of this blandishing Eve, it was a harder task to keep himself self-centered. Elsie White he found no trouble in resisting, for she avoided him, intuitively feeling

herself held aloof, but this was a different matter. Love, he could deny, or at least postpone. His own lusty youth was a more impetuous assailant; and Lillian deliberately enlisted the aid of that lustiness.

In the meantime Mrs. Rensselaer, puffing from the exertion of being dragged up the bank by Herbert, turned to that young man with severity. "Herbert," she admonished him, "really I think you are neglecting your opportunities most shamefully."

"I think so myself," he agreed. "If you were to let me alone I could make my way very nicely, and be perfectly happy. I could do anything, from going back on a ranch as head cow-puncher, to infesting a strenuous city office and working my way up."

"That dreadful Western blood you have in you will sometime drive me mad," she expostulated. "Please remember that you are, after all, a Rensselaer, and the only one of the branch who could restore the family fortune. Do you know that the parvenu who bought the old Rensselaer place on Fifth Avenue was bankrupted in Mr. Kelvin's recent New York operations? The place will be for sale. It is within your reach to make the name of Rensselaer precisely what it used to be." •

"With Miss Breed's money," commented Herbert with ill-concealed disdain. "If I loved her,

or if she herself were capable of love, it would be different."

"You are perfectly absurd, Herbert," she insisted. "Lillian is the richest girl in the world. After she is married, her little eccentricities, impossible in a girl, will only enhance her charm. Let me be perfectly frank with you. This girl, while she thinks she has her mind set upon Phillip Kelvin, really wants a husband. I scarcely dare usher her into society unmarried — she would disgrace us all; but any strong man, such as you, could marry her, master her, and make her content, and she would be most presentable. Kelvin is not offering her any encouragement just now, but mark my word, he will. If you will exert yourself at once and pay her plenty of attention, she will fall right into your arms."

"I am afraid that it would be my impulse to step back and let her fall still farther," he declared.

"You are ungrateful," she charged. "I am making more sacrifices for you than you know."

For a moment he softened. "I appreciate that you are, and I do seem ungrateful. But I want to work, to carve out my own fortune as Kelvin has done. I am not so clever as he. I could not make a million in five years, as he did, but I could try, which, if you only knew, is a great satisfaction. Instead of that, you make me stop work. You give

up practically your whole income to keep me an idler at a few good clubs in New York, between my all too frequent visits here. I'd much rather do something for myself, and, after all, I don't see how you can consistently object. You are yourself accepting a salary."

"Herbert!" she exclaimed, very much shocked. "I am a guest here, and the money I receive from Mr. Breed is the income from investments which he has made for me."

He laughed. "Ten thousand dollars," said he; "and on that Breed pays you dividends of ten thousand a year. It's salary, nothing else."

"How crude you are!" she protested. "How do you know that Mr. Breed does not make one hundred per cent on the money I gave him? How do I know? Again I tell you, you are ungrateful."

"I suppose so," he admitted wearily, "although why one should be compelled to be eternally grateful for an unwelcome and more or less oppressive gift —"

"That will be sufficient!" she returned, and he lapsed into moody silence.

As they neared the house, Elsie White, who had been gathering flowers for Lillian's room, went up on the porch, where Rollins met her and stopped to chat with her for a moment.

"If you must know," Rensselaar said, "there is

an illustration of why the thought of Lillian is so distasteful to me. That's the kind of girl I want to marry."

"Lillian's maid!" his aunt exclaimed. "Herbert, you are really past belief."

"You needn't worry about her; I don't want that particular one, and if I did I couldn't have her. Her eyes see no one but Phillip. As a matter of fact," and he laughed entirely without bitterness, "there is no use in my considering any girl while Phillip's around. They won't look at me."

"Nonsense!" returned Mrs. Rensselaer. "If you think that girls have no regard for family you are very much mistaken."

Herbert made a wry face. "Watch the man of accomplishment, auntie," he advised her. "He can nearly take his pick of the worth-while girls, for, though girls may not recognize the reason, accomplishment means something more than just what one has done; it means fundamental virility."

"Do you mean to say that if you went to this girl of no class whatever and offered her the Rensselaer name she would refuse you?"

"She certainly would," replied Herbert promptly. "To her, position means but very little, love means much; and she is beautiful enough to command love!"

"She is handsome," reluctantly admitted his

aunt; "but rather vulgarly healthy, don't you think?"

"God is vulgar in a good many things He does," replied Herbert wearily. "Sunsets and flowers, for instance. Dreadfully loud colors He uses sometimes."

Breed, just then, came out and called Rollins into the library where Kelvin was already seated. The old man was almost childish in his admiration of his two lieutenants, as he chose to call them.

"I have been waiting for years for this," said he, rubbing his clawlike hands together, as he looked from the one to the other of them. "In all my years of money-making my only worry was that when the time came I might not find capable men through which to wield the ultimate power I craved. Like most worry, it was wasted. You two young men have done wonderful work, but it has only just begun."

"Precisely my errand," said Rollins with a rather wan smile. "The work is only just begun, and at the outset I have found so much opposition that I ran down here for moral support."

"You've come to the right place," laughed Kelvin. "At Forest Lakes we're dealing almost exclusively in moral support."

"Backed by the dead weight of more cash than was ever in one man's control since time began,"

chuckled Breed. "What are your difficulties, Mr. Rollins?"

"Well," said Rollins, "I have practically put the Unified Steel Corporation out of business, as a monopoly. Here is a communication I had from MacDougal. If ever a big man made a whine in a letter MacDougal is the man, and here is his whine;" and with huge contempt he tossed down a three-page missive which Kelvin read with a smile.

"The answer," went on Rollins, "is open-hearth steel and the control of transportation. I have both. As fast as they can make them, the plants I recently installed in Tennessee are turning out one hundred and twenty-pound rails by the open-hearth process. The Unified Steel Corporation is compelled to make what we want or shut up shop. I have put them in direct competition with our own plants, and they are underbidding us. I intend to let them have some large contracts at a price we can not touch. Now I begin to have dreams."

"I don't see any difficulty in that," laughed Kelvin. "A man doesn't dream many dreams in the face of failures. It's success that brings dreams. I have dreams of my own. I have done a little thinking about these dreams of late."

"I know you have," interposed Rollins. "Somebody has been doing a great deal of thinking

around here. At first I thought it was Mr. Breed, but now I know that he hires his thinking."

Breed himself was the first to acknowledge by a chuckle the truth of this remark.

"I used to have to do it myself when I was poor," he admitted; "but that is not the way to success. You can't get rich that way, any more than you can by performing all your own manual labor. My success is built on an unusual ability to discover men who can think for me. But you two go ahead and exchange your dreams; I am interested."

"I have no objection to telling mine," said Kelvin. "In fact I am eager to tell them because it is necessary. I want to concrete. In the first place I want to do a little trust-busting."

"I've tried it, and that's why I'm here," laughed Rollins. "Trust-busting, with absolute control of every mile of railroad in the United States, is the easiest thing in the world. The only bother is that they won't hold still while you do it. My present struggle with the private-car nuisance has opened my eyes to what will happen when we really begin. Raymer, Speed, Melton Sears and Company, and all the others have been making life a burden to me. Strangely enough, they don't want to be drawn and quartered."

"I hate them, every one," suddenly snapped

Breed. "A dozen times they tried to gobble me up in the early days. I have their photographs, too, waiting to be checked off."

"We'll let you check them off by and by," replied Rollins. "They are crippled now, but it was a task. Even with all my experience I didn't appreciate the full extent of the private-car graft. It was a colossal trick, serving merely as a disguise for excessive and absurd rebates. The refrigerating-car system has been especially obnoxious, the leading idea seeming to have been to charge more for the so-called rental of these cars than the amount of the freightage."

"Well, you stopped it," Kelvin consoled him.

"Yes, I stopped it," admitted Rollins with a sigh, "and the next thing that happened I had all the big packers on my neck. They have not scared me any, even though they are making veiled threats; but they are making me feel sort of lonesome, so I came to Forest Lakes for company."

"The only way to forget the attacks of the packers," suggested Kelvin, "is to attack the other monopolies. Hamstring them the first stroke."

"Good!" said Rollins with relief; "it's a pleasure to find that we want the same thing without argument. It's simple enough. I've merely to establish my flat freight-rate, without undue reduction for quantity and without rebate, thus giving the

small shipper an equal chance with the big one. The interstate-commerce law may then go out of commission, for we will do the same work that it was designed to do, but in which it failed. The provisions of that law could be evaded by the large corporations working in conjunction with the railroads; but there will be no evasion of my rate-card, which, by the way, is ready to issue."

Kelvin and Breed exchanged glances.

"Don't misunderstand me," went on Rollins. "I consider the trusts as much a product of natural law as the attraction of gravitation; but where they attain to stupendous fatness merely on abuses they cease to fulfil the need which brought them into existence. The greatest abuse of which the monopolies have been guilty is in transportation. Probably more than half of the freight carried is shipped by large corporations, nearly every ton of it being subject to a rebate or a draw-back of some sort; and this drain on the railroads, amounting to millions every year, must be made up by the small shippers. I can lower the present ostensible cost of transportation on a flat-rate basis and make more money for our stock-holders."

Breed looked at Kelvin inquiringly. Phillip nodded his head.

"I have been over some of the figures," said Breed. "The aggregate is appalling, but I am

afraid that, after all, we shall be compelled to allow certain concessions in certain places."

Rollins turned slightly pale. "I have been waiting for that remark," he said, "but I want you to understand that there will be no concession of any sort," and he brought his clenched knuckles down, not noisily, but firmly, upon the edge of the desk. "One exception I grant you, and that is the secret rebate on Mr. Breed's bread, wheat, and cereal shipments, which was agreed upon in the first place. Other than that, absolutely none! I propose to manage these united railroads unhampered, as you agreed in our contract, or I propose to create such a stench that public opinion will revolt at the next stock-holders' meeting, and you will be utterly unable to secure proxies. Without proxies you have no railroad domination."

Again Breed and Kelvin exchanged glances. Again Phillip nodded his head.

"You are quite right in your contention, Mr. Rollins," admitted Kelvin. "But you misunderstand us. We don't intend to interfere with your absolute control. We do hope, however, to have you see that our way of planning is right. In the end we hope to have you decide for yourself that it would be wise to make certain concessions to certain corporations. Until then, we shall not even bother you with advice. In the meantime, promul-

gate your flat-rate sheet, and we'll stand behind you."

Rollins studied the matter over for some time. Back of all this he still felt was an ulterior motive, but they gave him no peg upon which to hang his suspicion. "Very well," said he. "I think that I shall remain at Forest Lakes for a month or so. I have the routine management of the roads in good order now and want to be quietly by myself to figure out some readjustments in routes. Now, since the roads are consolidated, there are places where short connecting lines of from ten to thirty miles would save either hauls of from one hundred to three hundred miles, or grades that are most expensive in operation. Moreover," and he smiled, "I had just as lief have the avalanche of protests come to me here as in New York."

"Good idea," agreed Kelvin. "All these people will be sure to attempt to see Mr. Breed after they have seen you, and Mr. Breed would instantly refer them back to you. It might just as well be done all in one trip."

"That is about the way of it," assented Rollins, rising. "I understand by this that you will neither promise nor attempt to make any concessions to these people."

"Absolutely none," declared Kelvin. "We'll give you our bond on that."

“Your word is enough at present,” replied Rollins dryly. “If you will stick to the letter of that I am perfectly satisfied.”

After Rollins had left the room Kelvin turned inquiringly to Breed. “Will he come in?” he asked anxiously.

“When the time is ripe, yes,” asserted Breed confidently. “His father was a judge, his grandfather was a governor, his great-grandfather had a powerful place in the cabinet of a United States president, his ancestors from the time of the Revolution have been honored with high office. It is in his blood, and when the time comes he’ll listen.”

CHAPTER XVI

MR. ROLLINS SPENDS TWO EVENINGS IN UNWILLING EAVESDROPPING

UPON the porch, that evening after dinner, sat Mrs. Rensselaer, Herbert, Kelvin, and Lillian Breed. Rollins, coming quietly down-stairs, stood unobserved in the doorway for a moment. Mrs. Rensselaer was holding Phillip in deliberate conversation. Herbert, aroused to a sense of his duty, was doing his best to entertain Lillian. Rollins smiled cynically as he saw the tableau and realized what it meant, and, turning, walked noiselessly back through the hall and out the side door. Back of the house he found Elsie White just coming down the kitchen steps, and joined her with pleasure. She was so frank, so wholesome, that he always had an indefinable impression of being the better for having talked with her, even though nothing of moment had been said.

“How the country agrees with you!” he observed as he joined her. “You were looking rather pale when I first saw you here, but you have found some marvelous rouge among these trees.”

"I like it very much," she admitted, turning his compliment with a smile. "I have already grown to have a certain amount of supercilious pity for city-dwellers."

"They really need it," he agreed with a laugh; "and to prove that I am sincere in that remark I am going to stop with you for a month or so."

"Good!" she exclaimed. "More people to enjoy Forest Lakes is all that we need."

"Do they never have any visitors?" Rollins inquired. "Week-end parties and the like?"

"Never," she replied. "For festivities of that sort they go down occasionally to Mr. Breed's other place in Virginia, but Mr. Breed is very jealous of having any social life whatever here."

Rollins pondered that fact for a moment in silence. It went well with a vague impression he had that Breed meant Forest Lakes to be the ultimate business capital of the country. They were walking down toward the kitchen-garden now, at the side of which, back among the trees, stood the cottage of Elsie's father, and, talking lightly of many things of no consequence, Rollins strolled by her side until they reached the cottage, where the garrulous Mrs. White met them at the door.

Mrs. White was delighted to be introduced to Mr. Rollins. She showed it in the expansive smile which spread upon her wrinkled face and disclosed

her yellow teeth, and she clasped his palm most vigorously with a toil-knotted hand. "I'm mighty glad to meet you, Mr. Rollins," said she. "I've heard so much about you."

"Nothing but good, I hope," said Rollins pleasantly.

"No, indeed," responded Mrs. White emphatically. "Elsie has told me all about what a fine man you are; and fine men are scarce enough any place. Are you going to stay long this time? The other times you never stayed more than two or three days."

"He promises us a month at least, mother," Elsie hastened to say, hoping to turn the conversation. "Have you seen father's new hot-houses, Mr. Rollins?"

"That's nice," asserted Mrs. White, ignoring Elsie completely. "It's fine to have a lot of good-looking men around. My goodness, I tell Elsie she might just as well be locked up in jail as to be out here where there are no men folks at all. She never will have a chance to get married if she stays here."

Rollins was thankful to Elsie that she laughed from sheer amusement and gave him a chance to join her. His amusement, and also his repressed embarrassment were heightened when, after Elsie had invited him to sit on the vine-clad little front

stoop, Mrs. White suddenly and conspicuously absented herself. The two were silent for a time, drinking in the beauties of the twilight in comfortable content, when they heard approaching voices.

"You had better come in with us," said the voice of Blagg from just beyond the corner of the house. "The organization now numbers more than a quarter of a million, all of the downtrodden, sworn to serve the best interests of the poor."

"But if they are all poor people what can they do to help themselves?" objected the voice of Ben White.

"Rise up and overwhelm the existing condition of things by the mere weight of numbers," responded Blagg quickly and tensely. "Moreover, the organization is not so poor as you might think. It has quite a snug little sum in its own treasury, and besides that I know where there are a billion and a half dollars in cash that we can seize upon the moment we rise. Look here, Mr. White, I want to explain to you the system of our organization —"

By the sound of the voices they were slowly walking away. Elsie turned to Rollins with a troubled frown.

"I don't like this Mr. Blagg," she declared. "He talks nearly every evening with father about some secret society he wishes him to join, and I am afraid."

Rollins laughed easily. "These socialistic organizations never do anything," he told her. "Chiefly they get together and talk large, and sometimes a few of the more rabid of them make a public demonstration which is immediately quashed by the police."

He thought no more of the matter just then, but he did think more and more frequently of Elsie White as the days wore on. He knew that he had lost caste with Mrs. Rensselaer the first time she saw him with Lillian's maid, but he did not care to hold caste with Mrs. Rensselaer. The Rollins men folk had held it as their right to marry whom they chose, contenting themselves with producing illustrious sons and demanding of their women only that they be pure. It was almost a tradition among these men to woo and wed healthy "daughters of the people," so, outside of his business hours, Sumner Rollins lived as he liked, enjoying the quiet and peace of Forest Lakes, its healthful advantages, its opportunities for uninterrupted planning; and he began a deliberate courtship of Elsie White.

He avoided Lillian Breed from fastidious choice, but he spent much time in his spare hours with Kelvin and young Rensselaer. He boated, rode, golfed, and took long walks with them, and for his other amusement tried to fathom the tense wills and purposes that lay about him. Henry Breed's mon-

strous desires for power and domination he took to be those of senility. Kelvin's dreams, as Rollins saw them, were but the natural, boundless ambitions of a young man of great ability joined to great opportunity, although given rein, he felt that they might be dangerous. Mrs. Rensselaer's desire to marry her nephew to Lillian Breed he placed in the same category as Mrs. White's desire to marry Elsie to some man of wealth and station. Blagg, the visionary, was, after all, the most curious study to him. He was destined a second time on this visit to eavesdrop on Blagg, though all unpremeditatedly.

One drowsy night he had dropped to sleep upon a bench on the porch, in the shadow of a climbing rose-bush. He was awakened by the scrape of chairs, and became conscious of low and tense voices quite near him.

"You too could love as I love," said the voice of Blagg, trembling with repressed intensity; "could love with seething brain, with pounding pulses, with a heart the throbs of which would hurt and hurt and hurt!"

"You are almost poetical in your anatomy of the emotions," drawled the contemptuous voice of Lillian Breed. "I had no idea that the love of money could affect one in that precise way."

"You don't mean that slur," he protested angrily. "You know that if you had not a dollar I would still

have for you this hunger that starves me, this thirst that parches me, this flame that burns me, this agony that makes me cry out in the night."

The torture that was in his tone was so apparent and so convincing that Rollins, not daring to move lest he betray his presence embarrassingly, felt profound pity for the man. A trace of that pity seemed for the moment to pass to Lillian too, for she was silent for some little space.

"You ought not to encourage yourself in that attitude," she said with less contempt. "You are making a breach in the confidence that is placed in you here."

"I would make a breach in the wall of Heaven," he retorted passionately, "I would break and destroy it utterly, would grind it to atoms, would scatter its dust to the four winds, if by that I might win you: and you could love, I tell you, as madly as I do."

"Yes," she admitted slowly; "but not you."

"I know," he responded bitterly; "but you are wasting your affections. Kelvin cares for no one but himself."

"Who told you to speak his name? Don't make me hate you."

"I'd rather that than indifference," he declared; "so hate me, for hate, at least, is an emotion. As for Kelvin, I will not be silent about him, for I

think you're mistaken about even yourself. It is not Kelvin to whom you are attracted, but the force he represents. The power to achieve, that is what you worship; but in your dreams of the power he might acquire you are blind to other possibilities. I too can give you power. Join with me, and future historians will acclaim us as the great liberators of the chained and manacled American public."

"Splendid!" she exclaimed, laughing lightly. "I didn't even know they needed liberation."

"You have much to learn," he returned. "Do you know that the army of the unemployed now numbers nearly a million? Do you know that there is an organization among them and their more fortunate brothers, aggregating a quarter of a million, which is sworn to change the existing order of things so that every man shall have an equal opportunity? You spoke of money a while ago. Well, for itself I despise money, but for what it can do for the cause of humanity I love it. Listen a moment. I could gain control of this organization and increase it to ten million if I had your opportunities to command a billion and a half dollars of cash."

"Of what are you talking?" Her tone now was a frightened one.

"The possibilities of a new and glorious order of things, a new social system, a new form of govern-

ment which shall guarantee to every man an equal distribution of earning capacity. I need to rally ten million men to the new cause. It will cost one hundred and fifty dollars per man. That amounts to a billion and a half of dollars. You have, let us say, influential friends who have plenty of money, solid cash. Join me, help me to raise this money, help me to carry through to its glorious conclusion this enormous benefit to humanity, and no king and queen will have a firmer and a more honored place in history than we shall have."

"It is a dream of folly," she protested. "You would expend all this enormous amount of money, if you had it, in promoting only a new reign of terror."

"By no means," he declared, and laughed. "My ten million men would need but to show their teeth and it would all be over. There need not be a blow struck. Of course, if any one came in our way he would have to suffer."

The voice of Mrs. Rensselaer broke in upon them, peremptorily calling upon Lillian for some music.

"Coming," replied Lillian. She turned to Blagg. "I must go in now," she said to him. "Your talk is perfectly silly but it is amusing, too. I find it quite — curious — and interesting."

She hurried into the house, leaving Blagg alone

on the porch. As soon as she had gone, Blagg stepped down into the grounds and disappeared in the woods, upon one of those lonely, passion-torn walks in which he so often indulged at night. Rollins sat quite still and thought for a long, long time.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. ROLLINS LEARNS OF THE REMARKABLE AFFINITY BETWEEN BUSINESS AND POLITICS

THE flat freight-rate was a tremendous sensation. The astute gentlemen of the newspaper fraternity immediately fathomed its sweeping possibilities. Simple as it sounded, it meant an industrial revolution more far-reaching than any innovation in a century. It was the beginning of the answer, if not the answer itself, to the tremendous problem of what to do with the trusts. Indefatigable workers of the Fourth Estate gleaned from hundreds of hidden sources a mass of statistics upon freight abuses startling even to Breed and Kelvin, even to Sumner Rollins himself. With the customary hysteria of the American press, which is but a justifiable deflection of the customary hysteria of the American people, the new flat rate, within a week, was hailed as the great Utopian realization, the one supreme act which was to level all distinctions, which was to place all business upon an equal footing, which was to cure all the economic ills of the country! And who was back of this huge

philanthropic move? Rollins, Sumner Rollins, the Napoleon of the railroad world. And who was back of Sumner Rollins? Henry Breed. As France had been behind Napoleon, the strength of his arm and his will and his mighty ambition, so Breed was behind Rollins. Yet another step, who was back of Breed? Phillip Kelvin. There was the man! Until Kelvin had come, Breed had done none of these radical things. Since Kelvin had appeared upon the scene, Breed had broken up the Stock Exchange, he had reduced the price of bread to cost, he had disintegrated the Unified Steel Corporation, he had removed the unjust discrimination of the railroads; ergo Kelvin was really the big force of all this reformation.

Kelvin! Great was Kelvin! Column upon column was printed about him, his past life, his phenomenal rise, his tremendous executive ability. Scarcely a paper of any note but carried a Sunday feature about him. His portrait was printed far and wide, and he leaped into the lime-light of publicity almost instantaneously. He became a national figure overnight, as it were. Men talked about him at clubs, in cafés, in street-cars, in their homes, wherever they were congregated. Even men of large affairs were impressed with Kelvin, and thought him worth studying, as they had good cause; for any man so possessed of power as to alter apparently the

entire commercial system of the country by a mere word of direction was a rich subject for investigation. About the flat rate, however, they merely winked. It was a splendid piece of buncombe for the public; it was a splendid weapon which would give Breed power of life and death over any business upon which he chose to exert it; but that it meant just what it stated on the surface was past belief.

Nevertheless it was better to have a very definite understanding, and as such matters were somewhat too delicate for correspondence, which never dies, a succession of suave gentlemen, representing various large interests, trailed Rollins from his New York offices down to Forest Lakes to meet, in succession, quite rude shocks. There was positively no satisfaction to be had from Rollins. The flat rate was a flat rate, and it meant exactly what it said. From Rollins they appealed to Breed, and Kelvin sent them back to Rollins. Rollins sent them away in dumb astonishment. Kelvin managed to hint to these hired intermediaries as they departed that it would be useless for any other than the most important men in the business to make this pilgrimage; consequently the various Mahomets came to the mountain.

The first of these was John G. Hepperdon, the head of the petroleum trust, one of the most perfect combines in existence, and one which had been built

almost entirely upon rebates and freight concessions of various sorts. Mr. Hepperdon, a large gentleman whose neck was the same size as his head, and who wore curious purple pouches under his eyes, was a trifle impatient over the necessity of having to make such a trip, and was insistent upon coming to a crisp working basis at once. For that reason he did not go to Mr. Rollins at all. He very calmly walked over that gentleman's figurative head to Mr. Breed.

"Hello, Breed," said he, walking in upon that gentleman as he sat in his library poring over a set of photographs, one of which happened to be Mr. Hepperdon's. "I don't see why you couldn't hold up Sawyer as well as me. Sawyer's a good, close-mouthed man. There's no need for such infernal secrecy about all this thing. Let's get down to blunt bed rock on this freight proposition. How much of a rebate are we to get, and what percentage of it goes to you individually?"

"Glad to see you, Hepperdon," said Breed. "It has been a long time since I had the pleasure of a brush with you. Where have you been keeping yourself so long?"

"Just got back from Europe," said Hepperdon, folding his puffy hands comfortably over his greatest girth; "but how about this freight business? I have to get back on the next train."

"Out of my hands entirely," said Breed. "You'll

have to see Mr. Rollins," and he rang for Kelvin, to whom he gravely introduced Hepperdon. "Mr. Kelvin, take Mr. Hepperdon up and introduce him to Mr. Rollins," said he.

Kelvin smilingly did so, and, having introduced the two gentlemen, quietly withdrew.

To Rollins, Hepperdon made much the same sort of a beginning as with Breed.

"The rate means precisely what it says," declared Rollins.

"Of course, of course," said Hepperdon soothingly; "but how are we going to arrange the rebate? I suppose you have some new plan for taking care of it."

"There is to be no rebate," declared Rollins. "Why should there be a rebate? You have to ship over our roads, and you may be thankful that we are making only a fair, percentage-yielding rate. As a matter of fact, the previously published rate has been lowered."

"That is exactly what I don't like about it," interrupted Hepperdon, the sparse gray hairs upon his cowlick standing out in several directions as he contracted his scalp in his puzzled impatience. "You haven't set your rate high enough for a good margin of profit from the small shippers."

"The margin of profit on all shipments is to be exactly the same," replied Rollins. "Just disabuse

your mind, Mr. Hepperdon, of the idea that there is to be a concession of any sort. There is no use in discussing the matter because this is flat and final."

"Do you mean that?" demanded Hepperdon, rising upon his ponderous cylindrical legs and waving one fat hand in nervous aimlessness.

"I mean it absolutely."

Hepperdon studied him in silence for a while. There was no doubt that Rollins meant precisely what he said.

"Very well," snapped Hepperdon. "Within two weeks there will be a special bill introduced into the United States House of Representatives, dissolving your railroad combination."

Hepperdon was waddling out of the house fuming, without stopping to make any further adieus to Breed, when Kelvin stopped him in the hall.

"Mr. Breed would like to see you for a few minutes before you go."

Hepperdon looked at him for a moment and then, with a grunt of dawning comprehension, followed.

"Hepperdon, about how much political influence do you actually control?" asked Breed.

"More than any one aggregation of business interests in the United States," declared Hepperdon, placing his hands upon his round knees and leaning his weight impressively forward. "I own exclusively a cabinet officer, five United States senators,

more than a dozen United States representatives and half a dozen governors, and minor officials, state legislators and the like, running up into the hundreds. Besides that, I have partnership interests in connection with other large commercial forces, in two or three times as many more political leaders."

"That tallies very well with our estimate," said Breed. "We may want to borrow this influence of yours a little later on, Hepperdon. In the meantime, suppose you just go ahead and pay this flat rate of Rollins' and say nothing. Leave it to me."

"Sure," said Hepperdon. "I knew there must be a nigger in the woodpile some place. You're looking very well indeed, Breed. I had heard that you were very much under the weather. Is your golfing doing you any good?" And Hepperdon set himself down quite comfortably to smoke a cigar and chat until it was time for him to start for his train.

The next day brought Raymer, rawboned and wooden featured but fairly oily in his suavity, and the head of the beef trust; and Valentine, little and screechy and marked with countless black freckles, and the head of the woolen combine. They came down on the train together, discussing the matter very thoroughly on the way, and together they came in to talk with Breed. Mr. Breed was very glad indeed to see them, and, denying absolutely that he

had anything to do with railroad affairs, passed them on to Rollins, who assured them with great firmness that the flat rate was a flat rate, and that it knew no friends or foes. In unison, and garnished with many rugged expletives, Mr. Raymer and Mr. Valentine declared to Mr. Rollins that they would invoke special legislation which would put his railroad monopoly out of the business, dissolve it and separate it into healthy competition, scatter it into easily handled fragments, and, incidentally, remove Mr. Rollins from any and all spheres of activity whatsoever, for ever and a day — and then some! On their way out Kelvin led them in to see Mr. Breed, who, with Kelvin's assistance, tabulated Mr. Raymer's and Mr. Valentine's legislative control.

The ensuing two weeks were taken up by a succession of such incidents as these, and at the conclusion of that time Representative Oswald introduced into the House a bill providing that no railroad should own stock in another one; that no man should vote control, by proxy or ownership, in more than one of two or more competing roads; and that no railroad official should hold either office or stock in another line of rails which reached between any two same shipping points. This was the straw, or rather the bale of straw, which snapped Rollins' already highly strung nervous tension. The continuous threatening of various interests that had sought to

exert pressure upon him had begun to wear him down, and now, when the news of this move was brought to him, he came to Breed and Kelvin in much distress. Really, it was not so much a surprise to Kelvin and Breed as it might have been for it was they who had instructed Hepperdon as to the psychological moment in which to have Oswald introduce his bill.

"I expected nothing else," said Breed, glancing at the Marconigram and handing it to Kelvin. "You know we told you in the first place that it might be necessary to make certain concessions."

"Never!" declared Rollins. "We'll fight them to the last ditch! They have introduced this bill, but they have not yet passed it!"

"But they will the minute it comes to a vote," said Kelvin. "Come up to my room and let me show you a diagram, Mr. Rollins."

In his office Phillip displayed a curious sheet of cardboard, almost as large as the top of his desk, upon which the name of every senator and every United States representative was set down. A few were marked in red as men who were not for sale, but the rest, the vast majority, were divided into groups, one "owned" by Hepperdon, another by Raymer, another by Valentine, etc., and the names were in some places cross-grouped, showing that certain of the senators and certain of the representa-

tives served several non-conflicting interests. The diagram told at a glance precisely how every man would vote on this bill.

"This thing is incredible," declared Rollins. "Such a state of affairs can not exist."

"Such a state of affairs does exist," asserted Kelvin. "You may close your eyes and touch a pencil-point in succession upon any half-dozen names there, not ringed with red. Wire those gentlemen and ask them to tell you by to-morrow how they intend to vote on this bill."

"I'll do it," said Rollins,

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. BLAGG CONTRIVES A MELODRAMATIC INCIDENT
FOR THE AMBITIOUS KELVIN.

BY afternoon Rollins had answers to all his wires. Four declared without reserve that they were for the bill — on principle. Two answered evasively.

“It looks bad, but we mustn’t allow this state of affairs,” protested Rollins. “We must stop it in some way or other. We must use counter-strategy.”

“There is only one that I know of,” stated Kelvin quietly. “Concessions.”

“I will resign from my management before I make a solitary concession!” declared Rollins.

“Would you pay five thousand dollars for a building-lot if you knew that you could immediately sell it for ten?” demanded Kelvin.

“Certainly,” replied Rollins; “but I don’t see where the illustration applies.”

“In just this way,” explained Kelvin. “With concessions buy legislators from enough of these men to secure legislative control, and go after the balance. This gives your flat rate pretty wide scope,

Rollins, and it protects us until we can control our own legislation. We have, Mr. Breed and myself, as you must have appreciated by now, certain large ideas of reform. We believe precisely as you do, that good business and justice are compatible. We intend to put the whole country on that plane, but to do it we must use whatever weapons we find shaped to our hand. There never was a more just and equitable contrivance than your flat freight-rate, but you can see at once what powerful interests are arrayed against it. We must conciliate those interests in order to cripple them. We will rent Hepperdon's and Raymer's senators until we can buy them or supplant them with some of our own. Then we will make our own legislation, and we will guarantee that you shall have a share in it."

Rollins was silent for a long time.

"It is a very simple proposition, Rollins," urged Breed. "You are only granting these concessions in order to be able, later on, to refuse them."

"Doing evil that good may come, eh?" laughed Rollins a little uneasily.

"Put it that way if you like," responded Breed dryly, "but when you are president of the United States, with the House of Representatives and the Senate in thorough sympathy with you —"

"President!" exclaimed Rollins.

"Yes, president," returned Breed. "I don't mind

telling you our slate now. When we first intimated that you might have to make some concessions, this thing was all mapped out, but we did not argue with you at that time. We wanted you to go ahead and see for yourself just how necessary our course of action was. Our program includes, this coming campaign, running Kelvin for president and yourself for vice-president. Mr. Kelvin wants but four years as president. At the expiration of his term of office we intend to put you up for president.

"And we'll elect you!" supplemented Kelvin confidently.

"President!" repeated Rollins in a daze.

They had touched the right cord. From back through his heredity there came a strain of reverence for the honor of high public office, and that strain was not to be denied. To be president!

"The plans are under way," stated Breed. "We have had them secretly at work for a year. We are gradually and quietly obtaining control of the political situation. To-day we could almost do without Hepperdon and Raymer and the others, but not quite. What do you suppose became of all the so-called 'railroad senators'? Did you ever wonder why they bothered you so little? Well, I took care of them — added them to my group. Mr. Rollins, I am an old man." Breed's hand strayed to the corner of his table where lay his well-thumbed old

Bible. He clasped it in his hand and pressed it against his body. "I am an old man, an old, old man," he repeated. "I have done some evil in my life, I suppose, but all this time I have been acquiring power; more power than any man in the world has ever possessed, and I intend to use this power for good. I intend to upset the very conditions by which I gained this power; for it is the fault of our economic system that I have so wonderfully succeeded. This fault is to be remedied. For the rest of my life I intend to exert this great power for nothing but good; to exert it in making a readjustment of our living conditions so that neither great wealth nor great poverty shall be possible. The Lord hath set the time for this great day, and mine is the appointed hand!"

Both men looked at him curiously. He was not now addressing them, but gazing intently into the fireplace. The pupils of his eyes had expanded, and they began to glitter with an unwonted fire. Doctor Zelphan, who had been sitting quietly in the corner, came hurriedly over and put his hand upon Breed. The door opened, and Lillian came in. She had been about to ask some trivial question, but seeing that look in her grandfather's face, she too hurried over to him and put her hand upon his other shoulder. At Zelphan's touch Breed had given no sign, but to the touch of Lillian he responded instantly. The



“The Lord hath appointed the time for His great reform

rigidity of his features relaxed; he shook his head as one shakes off drowsiness, and then looked up at Kelvin with a resumption of his old shrewd twinkle.

"So that's the program," he said, in quite a natural tone of voice. "Next year we'll run the ticket of Kelvin and Rollins."

Rollins caught his breath with a sharp little intake. "It is a high honor," he said.

Kelvin laughed lightly. "No honor could be too high for my greed of power," he said in a half-jesting tone. "I am still of the opinion that I should like to be emperor."

Lillian looked up at him, smiling. "And I still hold to my original declaration that if you are I want to be empress," she declared.

Something clattered at Kelvin's feet. Startled, they all looked down. It was a bright steel dagger.

"Beg your pardon," said Blagg, stooping down to get it. He had come in unobserved with a message. "It was very awkward of me. As it happens, this is only Mr. Kelvin's paper-knife, which I accidentally brushed off the corner of his desk," and he held up the trinket, which was familiar to all of them. "Only a paper-knife, but, after all, it is a dagger, too, and rather an unlucky omen to drop at the feet of a man who declares his desire to be emperor of the United States!"

The incident was passed over as of no moment.

Afterward, when Rollins and Phillip were once more going over Kelvin's illuminative diagram of senatorial control, Rollins laughed in keen amusement.

"Your man Blagg is as good as vaudeville," he observed. "At first I was inclined to take him rather seriously, but he's too melodramatic to mean anything. I happened to see that paper-knife incident out of the corner of my eye. Blagg deliberately pushed it off the desk to fall at your feet."

Kelvin joined in the laugh. "He's absolutely harmless," he said; "but he's an excellent wireless operator."

Shortly afterward the paper-knife disappeared from Kelvin's desk, but no one noticed its absence, nor would any one have given the matter a second thought if he had missed it.

The argument with Rollins had but one possible result; Hepperdon and Raymer got their concessions, as did a few others. The list of those who should be thus favored in exchange for their political control had been carefully selected, according to Kelvin's diagram, to make as few concessions as possible, compatible with the securing of a majority of legislative power. Raymer had originally appeared as representing the entire packers' combine, but when the matter was put squarely up to him he promptly left Speed, Melton Sears and Company,

and the rest of them out in the cold, took a comfortable rebate for his own shipments, and let them pay the full freight. It was excellent work, and it let him enlarge his plant at once. Valentine was left out entirely, Kelvin, with a smile, pointing out that Breed himself controlled all but one of the men whom Valentine claimed as his own. The Oswald bill was killed in committee, and the fact that this bill was never heard of again was passed over by the papers in the greater sensation of the desperate and losing fight that was being waged against Breed's railroad consolidation by the disgruntled business interests which could not escape from the "oppression" of the flat rate.

Valentine was one of the loudest objectors. His business was ruined, and he attempted to revive the Oswald bill by the introduction of a similar one. The legislative gentlemen who drew their pay from him made a great public ado about the introduction of this bill, but it died in committee precisely as the other one had died. Within six months the woolen-mills combine resolved itself into its original members. It had been a loose organization at best. There had been warring elements within it that might ultimately have torn it asunder, but Kelvin's publicity bureau, which was conducted by the New Jersey offices of Breed's United Food Company, seized upon this as the first shining example of what

the flat rate had done for the public, and Kelvin went soaring again in the public esteem. The mills of the woolen combine had once more become independent concerns, competing with one another with the double effect of raising the price of wool and lowering the price of the finished article, the farmers and the public being the great beneficiaries; and Rollins had done this, with Breed back of him as the momentum, and back of them both Kelvin, as the dynamic force. Great was Kelvin! Then the beef combine came to blows. Raymer, as he well might, was underselling the other packers and gobbling up their trade. Some of this internal war leaked out, and again the flat rate, Breed, Rollins, and Mighty Kelvin were heroes! The Unified Steel Corporation, the woolen combine, and the beef trust! There was a record over which to crow! Who now was the friend of the people? Why, Breed! And Rollins! And Kelvin, Great Kelvin!

But Kelvin had long since absented himself from Forest Lakes, leaving behind him no thought of any interest that might be there, save as it concerned his own boundless aims. The dreams of two women, one dark and one fair, followed him, but he would not have cared, now, if he had known. He left the field to his rivals — Mrs. Rensselaer for Herbert, and Rollins for himself — with perfect equanimity,

and plunged into his new plans with the same concentration that had marked his previous undertakings. In the meantime, Henry Breed, watched savagely by Zelphan, spent his half-hour daily in his huge money-vault, and day by day spent more and more furtive time upon his Bible, while Blagg, at dead of night in the privacy of his own bedroom, practised incessantly, with long, sensitive fingers, upon his sample combination lock. He could open it now, set upon any combination, by the mere feel of the drop of the tumblers.

Kelvin's new task was an agreeable one. He took up pleasant quarters in Washington and began to entertain the list of senators whom Breed counted as among his assets, and gradually his circle of acquaintances grew. He was gone about three months, and when he returned he sent for Rollins.

"Have you sent Hepperdon and Raymer and the others their rebates?" he asked.

"Yesterday, up to the first of the month," replied Rollins. "Why?"

"Because there are to be no more. Collect your flat rate and keep it, without a single exception. We've won."

"Rebate to the United Food Company, as usual, Rollins," interrupted Breed with a chuckle. "That's my only profit on bread now, you know, since Kel-

vin reduced it to cost. And rebate in cash, Rollins, always in cash!" and he rubbed his thin old hands together in tense enjoyment.

"But I don't quite understand," protested Rollins. "Can't they legislate against us effectively now?"

"Scarcely," returned Kelvin with a smile, "since we ourselves are the law-making body, so long as we keep the public from clamoring too much to their servants in Washington. I've just purchased stock in the government — former assets of Hepperdon and Raymer and their fellow bandits — to give us control."

Rollins looked troubled. "I don't like it," he said.

"Nonsense!" declared Kelvin. "We're using it to a good end. You can establish your flat rate now as you planned in the first place. Surely that is a bit of justice you could not have had otherwise. Moreover, we're going to begin the battle of the trusts in earnest."

"The battle of the trusts," repeated Rollins musingly. "It sounds interesting, at least."

"It won't be, though," replied Kelvin with contempt. "There will be no battle whatever. I'm merely going to chloroform them, on the eve of the presidential nomination. About the most popular idea that was ever put before the vast, unsuccessful majority of the voting public is the graded property

tax. Well, I'm going to flame into print with the suggestion for a graded corporation tax, and then have Mr. Breed's carefully tamed legislators frame that suggestion into a bill and pass it into a law. The wealthier the corporation the more it will be taxed pro rata, until, toward the top, the tax will become prohibitive. I look forward to seeing a fine, healthy new crop of corporations, all rather small. The law is already as good as passed, and I imagine that it will be quite a shock to your old friends Hepperdon and Valentine and Raymer, Speed, Melton Sears and Company, and a few others. Eh, Mr. Breed?"

But Henry Breed did not hear Phillip. He had just taken from the drawer of his desk a handful of photographs, a piece of red wax crayon, a hammer and some tacks and was starting for the rear study. As he passed, Phillip caught a glimpse of the top photograph. It was a portrait of Hepperdon.

CHAPTER XIX

KELVIN AND A STRANGER INSPECT SOME WORTHLESS LONG ISLAND REAL ESTATE

A CHEAPLY dressed fellow, a big man with a thick neck and broad shoulders and arms that hung crooked at the elbows, alighted at a little wilderness station on the Long Island Railroad, behind Kelvin and Sam. A farmer-like native, in a rattling old surrey drawn by a bony horse, was waiting at the station, and, disregarding the big fellow, who looked like a workman out of a job, approached the more prosperous appearing Phillip.

"You Mr. Kelvin?" he demanded.

"The same," replied Kelvin. "This is Mr. Purser, I believe?"

"I reckon so," admitted the other. "Old Hayseed Purser. Most people, when they come out to see me, are surprised to find such an old farmer in the real-estate business, but I take oath I've sold more Long Island property than all these plug-hat schemers five times over."

Kelvin, with a smile, had already clambered into

the front seat of the dilapidated surrey, marveling at the old cushions from which the dusty horsehair protruded on all sides. Mr. Purser, who was dressed in rusty and dusty and wrinkled clothing from peaked cap to plow-shoes, but whose rusty and dusty and wrinkled old countenance contained a pair of very bright and shrewd blue eyes, paused in the operation of unhitching the weather-beaten steed, and fixed upon Kelvin a contemplative gaze.

"You don't want to see that scrub-oak land we wrote each other about," he suddenly advised with engaging bluntness. "You're no cheap-lot boomer. You're lookin' for a summer home. Better let me sell you a nice piece of shore property. I got a fourteen-acre place with eight hundred foot of fine gravel beach where you can drive right down into the bay. Ten thousand dollars will —"

"No," objected Kelvin, still smiling. "I'll look at the scrub-oak property, I think."

At this moment the big, workman-looking fellow stepped up to Mr. Purser. "Could you tell me where I'd find a few acres of cheap ground fit for market-gardening?" he asked.

"There ain't any such property left on Long Island," declared Mr. Purser emphatically. "The land between this railroad and the water ain't cheap, and the land back o' that you couldn't grow anything on. It is all sand-dunes. Don't grow nothin'

but scrub-oak and scrub-pine." He was frowning as he spoke. He had already determined that the big man could not, in any event, be a profitable customer.

"I'll look at what you have, anyhow," replied the other.

"All right," said Mr. Purser reluctantly. "Just crawl in the buggy there. I reckon you might as well go along if Mr. Kelvin ain't got any serious objections."

"None whatever," said Phillip, glancing at the stranger casually, and without any more words the latter took his place in the back seat of the surrey, beside the negro.

Mr. Purser got in by the side of Kelvin, took the reins, and shook his raveled old whip in its socket; whereat the bony horse moved off at a gait which, aside from stopping and starting, was absolutely unalterable.

They drove straight away from the tiny station, and, turning from the highway by and by, struck off into a scarcely defined road through the wilderness of stunted oaks and pines, a road that could not possibly have been traversed by an automobile or followed without a guide, as Kelvin had been warned by Mr. Purser before he came down. Within ten minutes' ride from the beautifully wooded and turfed bay-front acreage, they were as

good as lost in a scene so forsaken that it did not seem possible that busy Broadway could be so near.

"Well, here you see it," said Mr. Purser deprecatingly. "I might drive you for hours, and it's all just like this."

"What is it worth?" asked Kelvin.

"I reckon I could turn over a thousand acres of it runnin' around forty and fifty dollars an acre."

"A thousand acres," mused Kelvin. "Is there much more available land as cheap as this on the island?" asked Kelvin.

"More!" gasped Mr. Purser. "You don't reckon you'd want more, do you?"

"I haven't said so," replied Kelvin, smiling; "but is there?"

"Any quantity of it," declared the other man. "Long Island's about as funny a place as there is on earth, I judge. It's two hundred and ten miles long, and it's ten miles across in the narrowest place. There ain't much of it worth shucks after a half mile away from the shore. The edge of the island's worth about a thousand dollars an acre, and the inside's worth about nothin'. Pretty nigh three-fourths of it's just plumb wilderness like this."

Phillip clambered out of the surrey with an instinctive desire to get his feet upon the ground. With his cane he poked into the soil. It was of loosely packed sand with but a slight alluvial ad-

mixture, dotted with vegetation so scant that there was scarcely enough green to relieve its dreary grayness. He walked up a little knoll and calculatingly surveyed the prospect in every direction. Deliberate planning was in his eyes, as Purser could see. Again he dug his stick into the loose ground, making a hole of considerable depth, and from this hole he took a handful of the soil and wrapped it up in a handkerchief, much to Mr. Purser's surprise. That shrewd old real-estate dealer turned around to exchange glances of amused wonder with the big man, who had sat silent in the back seat during the entire ride; but the latter did not notice him. He was watching every movement of Kelvin's with concentrated alertness. Mr. Purser's eyes narrowed as he studied the man.

"Do you see anything out this way you'd want?" asked Purser.

His question was unheard, the man was so absorbed in watching Kelvin. Then, for the first time, Mr. Purser noticed the huge negro. His upper lip was curled back in a snarl, showing his broad, yellow teeth and his blood-red gums; the sinister scar upon his cheek had turned livid; his eyes were blazing; his great, muscular hands were twitching, and he was watching the stranger as a crouching tiger might gaze upon its unconscious prey.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Mr. Purser involuntarily, and then hastily; "I say, stranger, do you see anything out this way you want?"

"Oh!" said the man with a start. "No, I don't think this land would suit me."

"I reckoned it wouldn't," said Mr. Purser dryly.

Kelvin came walking slowly back, turning again to take a comprehensive survey of the ground.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Mr. Purser as he came up.

"I'm not prepared to state just now," replied Kelvin with a glance at the stranger.

"We'll go back to my office and talk it over. I'll show you a plat of the grounds hereabouts," said Purser.

His office proved to be the front room of his little frame residence just outside of Safe Haven, the desolate station at which Kelvin had alighted, and they left the negro and the stranger, rather to the latter gentleman's reluctance, in the surrey while they went inside.

"Who is that fellow?" asked Kelvin as soon as they were in the room.

"Don't know. I never seen him before," returned Purser. "But suffering snakes! I get all kinds out here. Now, I'll show you them plats. Here's the piece of ground you was just lookin' at. There's two hundred acres in that patch, an' I can

get it for you for forty dollars an acre, like I told you."

"That includes your commission, of course," said Kelvin thoughtfully. "I don't know what your commissions are, Mr. Purser, but I am satisfied that they are none too small from my standpoint and none too great from yours. If I had figured on buying no more than this two hundred acres I'd say I'd take this lot at your price. How much money, on the average, do you make a year?"

Mr. Purser scratched his head. "That's pretty nigh a personal question, ain't it?" he asked with a dry smile.

"It's a business question," returned Kelvin. "I want to buy all of this sort of land you can secure within eighty-five miles of Broadway. I don't want to pay excessive commissions, and especially I do not want to pay whatever fancy prices the owners may set upon it. I'd like to hire you, for one year, to represent me exclusively in this matter. How much do you want?"

"Well," said Mr. Purser, slowly calculating, "last year I made nigh on to four thousand dollars in commissions."

"Very good," said Kelvin. "I'll give you five thousand for this year, beginning now. Do you suppose you can save me the amount of your salary?"

"I reckon I could," Mr. Purser assured him, succumbing to the temptation to brag upon himself a trifle. "I reckon there ain't anybody on this island can dicker for property as good as I can. The point is they can't fool this old hayseed. I know land when I see it, and I know a man when I see him, and when he says 'I'll take so much,' I know exactly how much less he'll take. I'm a pretty good man to bargain; but say," and shrewd lines came around the very keen eyes, "if I should happen, while I was workin' for you, to pick up a little deal for shore property, I reckon you wouldn't object?"

Kelvin smiled. "I don't think I should, so long as you don't neglect my business," he said.

"I ain't one of the neglectin' kind," declared Mr. Purser; "and I'm much obliged."

"It's a bargain then, is it?" inquired Kelvin.

Mr. Purser, feeling that he had been well studied, studied his own man in kind, and was apparently satisfied. "Yes, I reckon it is. Begins right now, don't it?"

"Begins right now," assented Kelvin.

"Well, then, this two hundred acres that the fellow wants forty dollars for — I reckon I can beat him down to about thirty-five, actin' as your agent."

Again Kelvin smiled. "There's a thousand of your salary saved at once," said he. "Well, go

ahead, Mr. Purser, do the very best you can. Make a thorough search of the vacant lands on the island and get me the best bargains possible, without making any noise about it. Draw on me at any time for any amount of money you want. In the meantime I think I had better leave a deposit with you," and producing from his pocket a check-book he wrote to the order of Mr. Purser, whom he had thoroughly investigated before coming upon this journey, a check the size of which made that gentleman gasp, and which also cleared away any traces of doubt that he might have had.

"I think that will be about all for the present," said Kelvin, and rose to go.

At the same moment the stranger, who had been sitting upon the front door-steps, got up and strolled off a little distance, where he was most earnestly inspecting the sky and the distant glimpse of the bay, himself under the equally earnest inspection of the negro, Sam. He went back to New York on the same train with Kelvin. As was quite natural, he took the subway where Kelvin did and followed into the same car; he also left the train at the same up-town station, and Kelvin noticed with a frown that he followed up the street. When Kelvin and Sam turned in at their hotel, however, the man passed on, and Phillip convinced himself that the thing had been merely a coincidence. It did seem

to him, however, as he thought the matter over, that wherever he went recently he found some poorly dressed stranger with him, always a different man, but always having that indefinable air of being a workman out of a job.

That night the stranger in an obscure lodging-house, wrote a long and laboriously scrawled letter, which he afterward translated into cipher, to George Blagg, at Forest Lakes; and Kelvin, in his splendidly furnished apartments, at the expensive Esplanade, wrote a full report of his day's doings to Henry Breed, also at Forest Lakes.

Kelvin seemed to be going in rather extensively for real estate, for the morning found him poring over an immense hand-drawn map of New York City, whereon three large sections were blackly shaded. While he was copying some figures from a bulky type-written list, referring occasionally to one of these shaded portions of the map, one Patsy McCalken, a red-faced man with a mole on his nose to combat his aims at dignity, was announced. To him Kelvin displayed the blot over which he had been busy, and asked pertinent questions about it.

"It's no use, Mr. Kelvin," announced Mr. McCalken, "I don't know who's behind you, unless it's old Henry Breed, but the man don't live that can swing them precincts away from the Big Chief — and you say there's nawthin' doin' with him."

“But they’re your precincts,” objected Kelvin. “I am told that they lie in the hollow of your hand; that they vote as you tell them to the last man; that they’d follow you into the river.”

Mr. McCalken swelled with visible pride. “Them’s the finest conducted precincts in all the city,” he justifiably boasted. “Any man that don’t pay attention to the word had better move, and that settles it. But say,—” and curious little wrinkles rolled up on both sides of his mole, “it can only be handled one way, now. It votes the same ticket year in and year out, and if I was to try to switch it—well, you see it’s all a part of the organization. We just got to stick together; see?”

“I see,” said Kelvin with a smile. “In other words, you all know entirely too much about each other.”

Mr. McCalken only grinned. “Anyhow, there’s no chance on earth, no matter how much was—no matter how strong the arguments that might be held out.”

“All right, then,” concluded Kelvin briskly. “If you can’t swing that district to my principal I’ll have to take it away from you.”

Mr. McCalken’s grin became a guffaw. “When you do that,” said he, taking his hat, “I’ll say you’re a bigger man than Dick Croker ever was.”

"We expect to make Mr. Croker a dim and faded memory of ineffectiveness," announced Kelvin, smiling and looking at his watch.

His next caller was of a different type, a big man with strong nose and jaw, a good brow and a keen eye, but bearing about him, in some indefinable sense, the marks of a losing fight.

"Hello, Pellman," said Phillip heartily, coming forward to shake hands with him. "It's as good to see you as it was to hear your voice over the 'phone the other day. How are things coming with you?"

"Rotten, thank you," confessed Pellman with a wry smile.

"Haven't succeeded in getting a good start yet, have you?" Kelvin bluntly surmised.

"What are you trying to do? Rub it in?" demanded Pellman, frowning.

"Certainly not," responded Kelvin reproachfully. "I'm treating the whole thing as a matter of course. Breed and myself broke you wide open when we broke the Stock Exchange, and I want to know, for business reasons, exactly where you stand. If you are on your feet again, why I'm glad of it. We'll have lunch together, and I'll beat you a game of billiards. If you're not, however, I am able to throw a big chance your way."

"You may go right ahead with the chance," declared Pellman eagerly, hitching forward his chair. "I don't mind admitting that you broke me so completely I can't start anything big enough to inspire confidence."

"Would it inspire any confidence if you were known to be engineering the most enormous real-estate deal ever consummated in New York?"

Pellman's eyes began to brighten. "It would have to be a big one," he warned.

"Would you call it a big one to buy these districts?" and Kelvin indicated the three shaded spots on his map.

"Buy them!" gasped Pellman. He barely glanced at the map and then surveyed Kelvin in astonishment. "Why, man—" He paused; words were lame things.

"Well, I want them," declared Kelvin. "Of course, when you get through they will represent a pyramid of mortgages, but in the meantime it will take a lot of cash backing, which I have, as you probably know." They both smiled. "The reason I have sent for you is that I must not appear in this, even by the slightest hint, nor must Mr. Breed. Do you care to undertake the deal for immediate manipulation?"

"Well," returned Pellman with mock hesitation,

"I don't think I could start at it in much less than thirty minutes."

In less than an hour after Pellman had gone, Senator Sawyer found Kelvin busy over another large map, this time of the United States. Here and there districts were lightly shaded, in other places they were cross-hatched, in others left in pure white. The senator, a portly gentleman with bushy white eyebrows, and with a bland purse-mouthness of expression suitable to passing the collection-plate of a pleasant Sunday morning, was gravely glad to see his dear young friend, Mr. Kelvin, gravely anxious about his physical condition, and as gravely solicitous about the health of his dear old friend, Mr. Henry Breed.

"As for myself," Kelvin smilingly informed him, "I shall leave you to judge; as for Mr. Breed, he is hearty enough to desire myself and Mr. Rollins nominated for the offices, respectively, of president and vice-president of the United States, by your party, at the convention this coming spring."

Senator Sawyer sat down heavily, and placing his hands upon the arms of his chair with his shoulders hunched and his elbows akimbo, regarded Mr. Kelvin long and silently, waiting for the signal to break into a beaming smile.

"I have been very busy over the proposition,"

Kelvin went on. "On this map you will find, left in white, the portions of the United States in which Mr. Breed's personal influence and forces can aid decisively in the control of the party organization. These portions that are lightly shaded represent districts and states in which missionary work is now being carried on. The darkly shaded portions are districts with which we expect to have the most trouble."

Senator Sawyer glanced, unseeing, at the map, and then resumed his staring survey of Kelvin. "Am I to understand that you are in earnest about this?" the senator painfully inquired.

"Certainly," replied Kelvin calmly; "as earnest as we were about breaking up Mr. Hepperdon's monopoly."

Mr. Sawyer winced. He had once been Hepperdon's chief senator; he had attended to Mr. Hepperdon's little matters of legislation for a great many years, and had only recently, upon the unfortunate dissolution of Mr. Hepperdon's combine, associated himself with Mr. Breed.

"We have every prospect of success," Kelvin evenly resumed. "In the first place, as the absolute proprietor of every ounce of bread and cereal food stuff in the United States, Mr. Breed had a great many — friends and useful advisers, among the various legislative bodies of the country."

Senator Sawyer gravely nodded his head. "In the second place, after he had secured control over every mile of railroad in the United States, Mr. Breed became possessed, by acquisition, of a great many other friends and useful advisers theretofore attached to the railroads." Senator Sawyer squirmed slightly in his chair. "In the third place, through his control of the railroads, Mr. Breed took a notion to do a little trust-busting which proved highly successful; and thereupon he became possessed, by reason of his immense anchorage facilities of several other suddenly attached friends and useful advisers. Quite a little army, Senator."

"Y-e-s," slowly admitted Mr. Sawyer with great mournfulness.

The senator had been harboring quite other plans than those proposed by Kelvin, plans in which he was vitally interested; and the whole of Kelvin's conversation had been about as pleasant as an hour in a dentist's chair.

"You will find, Senator," went on Kelvin, "that the campaign is perfectly mapped out. I have secured a large suite on the floor just above this one for your headquarters. You will readily understand that I wish to remain, as does Mr. Rollins, an ostensible dark horse, up to the very hour of the nomination, and your operations will need to be as quietly conducted as possible. The headquarters

will comprise private apartments for yourself and such others as you care to have with you, and all living expenses will, of course, go in with the other items of expenditure. There will, naturally, be a generous honorarium attached. I shall be highly gratified if you will take charge of the bureau, as will Mr. Breed and Mr. Rollins."

Mr. Breed's request, coming through Kelvin, was an order. Senator Sawyer rose with a sigh, but he immediately beamed with a cheerful, even a benevolent, smile.

"The entire matter comes as a surprise to me," said he; "but as a very pleasant surprise. I can see a most interesting campaign stretching before us, and it will afford me keen delight if I can in any way contribute to the success of two such remarkable young men as yourself and Mr. Rollins."

Herbert Rensselaer called, the picture of well-dressed laziness and the novelist's ideal of a healthy young club-man with nothing on his mind but his hair. Kelvin, who had not smoked that day, accepted a cigarette gratefully, lit it, leaned back in his chair, fixed his eyes upon Rensselaer, and rested.

"By George, I don't know how you do it, Bert!" he declared. "In the old cow-punching days you were twice as active as myself; but now — well, I'll bet you have just come from the Volute Club, four blocks away, in a taxi."

"Tell me the amount of the stakes, and I'll pay you," drawled Herbert. "I'm all that you say I am, Phill, but it's only a pose. Beneath my cravat pants a bosom that is seething with discontent. You know the conditions — last scion of the historic old Rensselaers and all that rot; poor as a church mouse; my revered aunt cheerfully sacrificing the absurdly large salary which she denies that she receives, to make a dwaddler out of me, because a Rensselaer must not work. I am supposed to repay her by marrying the aforesaid Lillian, who doesn't know it yet. Would working be any more sordid than that? Would anything be more sordid than my sitting here talking about it all? Honestly, Kelvin, if something doesn't turn up upon which I may expend a little man-power energy I'll explode by and by."

"Just possess your soul in patience," advised Kelvin, smiling. "Wait until I am elected president, and I'll make a cabinet officer of you."

"'Tis the way of the world," sighed Rensselaer. "I come to my friend to make my whine and be soothed with sympathy, and I meet with cold, unfeeling jests."

"No, honor bright, I mean it," declared Kelvin, blowing a thin line of blue smoke at the ceiling.

"Nonsense," protested Herbert. "I have no qualifications, old chap."

"Yes, but you have," insisted Kelvin, speaking quite seriously. "You possess the leading qualifications. I know you of old. You can not be influenced, coerced, or bought."

Young Rensselaer suddenly straightened up in his chair with his hands gripping the arms of it, his whole tense figure startlingly unlike the listless form that had at first lounged there. "You are right," said he with a snap of his jaws; "and you may bet your last penny upon it that I'll carry out your orders absolutely, wherever you put me, whether in the cabinet or at the head of an army."

"You might even have a chance at that," returned Kelvin dryly. "In the meantime, since I suppose you came around to entice me to idleness, how shall we waste some time?"

"Oh, dinner and the theater, I suppose," replied the other, relapsing into his drawl of indifference.

"Very well," assented Kelvin; "suppose you meet me at six thirty. I still have Rollins and Baker and a couple of political burglars to see this afternoon."

His "political burglars" came first, but of these he made short shrift, introducing them, as he did Baker, who was at the head of Breed's publicity department for the United Food Company of New Jersey, to Senator Sawyer, who had already taken possession of the magnificent headquarters in the Esplanade and was ordering an elaborate luncheon.

Rollins came later, trim and precise and as fastidiously clean as ever, and feeling athletic to his finger-tips.

"I have a brilliant solution for your Long Island transportation problem," he began with enthusiasm. "I can deliver commuter trains to your farthest point, if it does not exceed the eighty-five-mile run you promised, in one hour from the bridge subway station."

"You don't say," returned Kelvin in surprise. "I was going to tell you the details of the joke on poor Sawyer, but this is better. How do you do it?"

"Rather neatly, I think," replied Rollins. "The first rush-hour train, equipped with heavy motors, will carry eight cars, one for each of the last eight stops on the line. One minute later a train will follow hauling a car for each of the next last eight stops. The next will go an even shorter distance, and so on. None of these rush-hour express trains will stop. At its own station the car for that place will simply cut itself off, make a flying-switch, and become a local trolley under its own motor. I can maintain an eighty-five-mile-an-hour speed from one end of the line to the other in that way. Local trains, of course, will run at the usual rate."

Kelvin nodded in satisfaction. "I knew you could work it out," he commented. "I'll have the

necessary permits in two weeks, and you can begin construction at once. In the meantime, let me show you a new map," and from the thick pile of such diagrams upon his desk he drew one showing the entire consolidated railroad system of the United States. "Here is what your railroad control has done. It has accomplished the political dominion of half the United States. Each of those lines paralleled in red has conquered its kingdom. I shall not rest until every mile of it has done its duty. The old system of political control is disintegrated, and the new era has come in. Rollins, in your mastership of every mile of railroad in the United States, you have the most powerful political engine ever devised by man."

"I don't like it to be prostituted to this use," protested Rollins.

"The same old cry," returned Kelvin with a slightly exasperated laugh. "You ought to be satisfied. I don't know how many millions of graft you have eliminated. You've equalized freight-rates, so that the small shipper has an equal chance with the big one. You've been able to break up a score of top-heavy monopolies and trusts. You've accomplished at least half your designs."

"I know," granted Rollins; "but, even so, I have been compelled for political reasons to give rebates which I had sworn I would never give. I have been

compelled for political purposes to make concessions which I had sworn I would never make. I have been compelled to do a great many things against my conscience, against my notions of public policy, against my most cherished dreams."

"You're the most persistent chap," complained Kelvin. "When we have a Congress and a Senate of our own choice, we can carry out all the Utopian plans of both Breed and ourselves. Just now it is necessary to give something in order to take again. These concessions that you are making are only investments, as Breed would say."

Rollins looked up curiously. "I don't quite understand Breed," said he. "He seems at times to possess all his old shrewdness, but at other times to be involved in a maze of mysticism."

Kelvin frowned. "He's spending too much time with his Bible," he declared. "He's intemperate with it."

CHAPTER XX

LILLIAN PAYS PHILLIP AN ENTIRELY UNCONVENTIONAL VISIT

KELVIN, returning shortly after midnight from his evening with Rensselaer, went directly to his own sleeping-apartment, which was at the extreme end of his suite. Sam, crouching on the floor in the corner with pillows and cushions at his back, opened his coal-black eyes unblinkingly, passing instantly from profound sleep to alert wakefulness, and, having without a word gravely inspected his master for a few moments, arose to his huge height, turned down the covers of Phillip's bed, and laid out sleeping-garments. Kelvin having by this time sat down, Sam removed his master's shoes and placed comfortable slippers on his feet. While he was at work he looked up with a sudden shrill chuckle and a grin so wide that it broke into queer curves the long, straight scar on his cheek.

"What are you laughing at, Sam?" asked Phillip with the smile of amusement that Sam's hilarity always brought to his face.

"Oh, jes' nothin'," declared Sam, and chuckled still more.

"I bet you are thinking of Lucy," charged Phillip.

"Ah reckon Ah am," confessed Sam with a laugh that ended in a shrill falsetto. "Lucy an' sumpin' else."

"Something else, eh? What is it?"

"Ah ain' done s'pose to tell," giggled Sam. "Got t' have a secret once in a while, boss."

Sam busied himself about the remaining preparations for Kelvin's retiring, and while he did so gave vent to occasional chuckles to which, however, Kelvin paid but little attention, for already he was immersed in that half-hour of revel in the vast, gilded halls of the future which was his one habitual dissipation before retiring, and he scarcely realized when Sam had departed for the night, so occupied was he with his boundless enterprises and ambitions. Olympus! With that height alone would he be content — and he had no bodily or spiritual, mental or moral clog to weight him down. In that he exulted. He was temperate to the extreme; he had permitted himself no vices, large or small; he had kept himself free from all entanglements with women; had even denied himself that greatest of all weaknesses — or else that greatest of all strengths — love! Stern, inflexible, merciless, un-

deviating, there was no flaw whatever in his weapons or in his armor; and there would be no stopping him.

In his exultation he rose to his full height, obeying an instinct which impelled him to stand that he might feel the superb strength of his body and of his soul and of his will, untrammelled by any weakening support. As he did so the slight and cautious click of a knob and the slight, careful creak of a door startled him. He turned hastily in the direction from which the sounds had come. The end door of his suite was the customary twin affair by which hotel apartments are separated. On taking these apartments he had tried his own door and found it locked; but, nevertheless, it was this door which was opening! He quickly swung his hand back to his hip pocket and held himself poised for whatever might occur. A touch of bright color and a glittering eye were visible now in the crack of the door, and then it swung suddenly wide, and Kelvin's hand dropped limply to his side; for the apparition which confronted him proved to be Lillian Breed, slender but exquisitely rounded in the silk kimono which revealed her white throat and her shapely forearms, warm against the soft crimson fabric. Her dainty feet were incased in fur-edged slippers of red felt. Her hair and her eyes seemed blacker than ever. Her face, a perfect oval, was

warmed by the rich color of abundant blood. Her pointed chin was dimpled, and her scarlet lips were curved in a smile, half of mischief and half of delight.

“Lillian!” gasped Kelvin.

Her eyes sparkling, she put her fingers upon her lips and noiselessly closed her own door, then Phillip’s, behind her, then advanced to him with outstretched hands. He took them in his own as a matter of course, but held her at arm’s length.

“What are you doing here?” he demanded. “Have you gone mad?”

“Not at all,” she laughed gaily. “I’m quite sane and sensible, thank you. It was lonesome at Forest Lakes, so I brought Mrs. Rensselaer up to chaperon me for a week’s shopping, and just now, after making sure that you would be quite alone for the rest of the evening, I have merely dropped in to have a chat with my old friend.”

“Mrs. Rensselaer? Where is she?” asked Phillip.

“Sound asleep and snoring in her own apartment, which is on the other side of mine, with the bath-room between and my door locked. I attended to that, all right, you may be sure. You don’t seem at all glad to see me, though,” and she pouted with much coquetry, though her shining eyes, upturned to him, belied the pout.

"I'm not," answered Phillip, pushing her away almost roughly. "This is the utmost folly. You must return to your own room, and in the morning you must move to some other floor or I shall. No, you must go to some other hotel."

She only laughed at him and put her hand upon his arm, still half outstretched as if to hold her away. More than once Phillip had rebuffed her, but now she knew her power. It was an exquisitely tapered hand that lay upon his sleeve, and an absurdly small hand; but he suddenly felt its quite appreciable weight, and its insidious warmth.

"I sha'n't move from the hotel," she said, looking up into his eyes and laughing as she shook her head. "I sha'n't move from these apartments. I sha'n't move from this room, even, until I get ready to go. Phillip, I have been ordered around like a child ever since I can remember. I have had to sit in a corner and merely watch great things being done. Born with all the nervous energy and all the vast capabilities that made my grandfather rise from a poor boy to the richest man in the world, fate cursed me by making me a girl, with no outlet for all the burning desires that seethe within me; and now I'm going to revolt. I'm going to have the things I want, right or wrong, and among them I'm going to have you!"

"Lillian!" he gasped, and drew back from her;

and yet he could not look down into her blazing eyes, upon her flushed cheeks, upon her moist, red lips, upon the rounded column of her throat, with revolt. She saw the widening pupils of his eyes, and knew that this Achilles, like him of old and like every warrior since, was vulnerable.

A soft-footed hallman, paying special attention to those apartments, listened with all his ears. He could not distinguish words, but he felt quite sure of the hum of voices.

"You are a conqueror," Lillian went on, drawing closer. "Your hand is the hand of might, the hand that could grasp and wield with relentless power either sword or scepter. You have in your face the sternness and the force of the old vikings, and would be as ruthless. You do not know how I, too, love power and all that represents power. I love it so much that I could worship it even while it crushed and destroyed me. The very strength of these arms I want for mine. Do you remember one night when we were walking in the woods at Forest Lakes?" Her hands stole up to his shoulders. "I wrenched my ankle and you caught me and, for one breathless instant, held me; held me tightly and strongly to you. I felt your heart beat against mine; I felt your breath upon my cheeks; I felt your strong arms around me." Her bare arm had slipped up and slid around his neck, and suddenly

she had clasped both of them about him and clung to him. For a moment longer he resisted, and then, shaken and torn by the fierce storm of emotions that raged within him, and swept from the impregnable base upon which he had pedestaled himself, he suddenly crushed her to him and rained kisses upon her smooth brow, her silken eyelids, her burning cheeks, her soft lips ; and these last clung to him, clung while the mad fever that had suddenly possessed them both swept them in great waves of flame.

CHAPTER XXI

LILLIAN, BRAZEN IN HER TRIUMPH, DEALS MORTAL
BLOWS TO ELSIE AND BLAGG

KELVIN met Mrs. Rensselaer and Lillian at breakfast, and they talked of the opera and gowns, of automobiles and an international wedding. After breakfast he bought the political control of an entire state with the litigative clientage of a thousand miles of railroad. He met in the hall of his floor Elsie White, and, whatever anguish it gave his soul to meet now this girl who had loved him, and loved him yet, in all purity and tenderness, he talked calmly with her, chatting pleasantly about her father's garden at Forest Lakes. He let a contract for a million dollars' worth of grading and cement sidewalks. He saw Sam and Lucy laughing in the servants' elevator, understood Sam's hilarity of the night before, and had an inkling of how his door had come to be unlocked. He went to the theater at night with Mrs. Rensselaer and Lillian, and, after they had returned and Mrs. Rensselaer had retired, the soft-footed hallman listened again to the low voices in Phillip's apart-

ments, and sent his second cipher message to George Blagg, who, by this time, was hollow-eyed and pale with suffering — and murderous!

On the following day Phillip, alone with Sam in the wilderness of Long Island, was shot at. Scarcely had the report sounded when Sam, crouching low to the ground like an animal and running with neck and head and gorilla-like arms outstretched, plunged into the woods. He was gone fully an hour, and rejoined Phillip at the station. His eyes were bloodshot and he was panting, while his lips twitched back over his teeth now and then; but he was smiling! Phillip, studying his face curiously, asked him no questions, and Sam volunteered no information.

At the end of the week, Lillian, with her cortége, went back to lonely Forest Lakes. Where Kelvin and Rollins and Herbert Rensselaer had helped to enliven the huge empty house and the immense acreage — it, too, empty except for the small army of gaunt and grim and grizzled woodsmen, who, with guns slung comfortably in their arms, kept close sentry — now there remained but Henry Breed and George Blagg and Doctor Zelphan. Zelphan met her first as she came up on the porch, peering at her through his thick glasses with the same curious regard that he always bestowed upon her, the same that he would have given to a strange and brilliantly

colored insect. Suddenly his eyes lighted as they caught her glance. For an instant these two looked into each other's souls, and Lillian felt her cheeks burning; but in an instant more she had closed those portals of her inmost consciousness and bestowed upon him a stare of wilful insolence, whereat Doctor Zelphan turned as she swept through the open door, and, rubbing his fat palms softly together, chuckled.

Lillian stopped for a moment in the dim old library where Henry Breed sat in absorbed contemplation, his elbows on his desk, his leathern cheeks and hollow temples supported in his lean old palms, and his old, well-thumbed Bible open before him. He looked up, unseeing, as she entered, and placed his long forefinger upon the passage he had been reading.

“‘Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath,’” he solemnly intoned, “‘and behold every one that is proud and abase him. Look on every one that is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked in their place.’”

As he finished, a look of intense malignity overspread his emaciated features, straightened the curve of this thin, flexible lips, and glowed in his glittering eye, and his right hand slowly reached forward and clutched as if strangling some imaginary foe. Lillian, though possessing but little actual affection

for her grandfather, had still a strong bond of sympathy with him, and was shocked at the change that had taken place in him during her one week of absence.

"Grandfather," she said, sweeping toward him with the quick decision that characterized her, "you are spending too much time in this stuffy old room, since there is no one here but Zelphan. It is perfectly glorious outdoors. The car is still outside. I want you to come and ride with me. I want to talk with you. I want to tell you a lot of things about my trip."

She had put her hand upon his shoulder, and the touch seemed to arouse him instantly. He reached up and took her hand between his own and gazed at her with a slow return of his habitual shrewd expression.

"You are looking charming," he commented. "Your trip has done you good. I never saw your eyes so bright and your cheeks so red. It has been very lonesome without you. Did you see Kelvin?" There was eagerness in the question.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "He's accomplishing wonders."

"I know," he said, and glanced at a pile of wireless telegrams, strung upon a desk hook that lay at his right hand. "He's a marvelous young man, that. He is the instrument of Providence, placed



Elsie turned slowly, a flush of crimson mounting to her brow

in my hands against the day of chastisement and purification, and of the new birth."

"I don't know about that," returned Lillian dryly. "I am rather inclined to think that you are the instrument in his hand."

"The tail can not wag the dog," said Breed, smiling. "The things Kelvin aims to do for himself are the things I want him to do for my own ends, and if he ever gets too big for me I'll break him as I would any other efficient but dangerous tool. But tell me about him."

"That's just what I wanted to do," said Lillian. "Wait until I run up and get into something more comfortable than these traveling-clothes, and then I'll go out and drive around through the park with you and talk. I want to see the place again. It seems as if I had been gone a year."

Leaving her grandfather to muse anew over the vault beneath his feet, where reposed the silent weight of power only biding its time to reveal its resistless might, Lillian hurried to her apartments, where she found Elsie White standing before a photograph of Phillip. Lillian smiled cruelly as she viewed this tableau, and stood silent until Elsie, feeling her presence in the room, turned slowly, a flush of crimson mounting to her brow as she met Lillian's gaze.

"Get out my gray dress, the one with the garnet

points," the latter ordered crisply, paying no apparent attention to Elsie's momentary confusion. "I have only time to wash my face and hands and have my hair done over. Have my bath ready in three-quarters of an hour after I leave the house."

When her traveling-gown had been exchanged for a fresh one, she sat before the dresser upon which Phillip's photograph was standing. "He's a handsome fellow, isn't he?" she observed carelessly as Elsie began to smooth out her hair.

"Who?" asked Elsie quietly.

Lillian glanced sardonically at Elsie in the glass, but the girl back of her had her eyes bent steadily upon her work.

"Kelvin," answered Lillian. "He's built like an Adonis and muscled like a young Hercules; but the touch of his hands, strong as they are, is like velvet." She was keeping her cold eyes now steadily fixed upon those other eyes veiled beneath their downcast lids, and that cruel smile sat fixedly upon her mouth. "His eyes," she went on, "are as cold and clear as the winter stars, and as difficult to warm, but when at last they blaze, they are like unquenchable coals. His lips"—she lingered over the item with a relish, still watching that pale face—"his lips are cool and firm"—the hands busily engaged with her black tresses trembled slightly—"but suddenly they are like fire. I think I shall

marry him! *Elsie!* You hurt me dreadfully that time! You are becoming more and more clumsy every day. I am afraid that I shall have to discharge you," and, having inflicted all the pain that she could, she went down the hall singing blithely. A stranger, hearing her, would have thought that there was nothing but gentleness and guileless joy in her heart.

She stopped in at Blagg's office. He had heard her coming. He was receiving a message at the time, and the light of the tubes gave to his emaciated face a ghastly wanness. As she entered he only glanced up with smoldering hate. Lillian smiled back in all her witchery at that black look. She knew that she had never been more beautiful than now. She knew that her beauty was a perpetual torment to this man, and in the absence of more entertaining prey she had played deliberately upon the love she had found in him, had heightened and tortured it, had encouraged and then repelled it, had toyed with him as a cat does with a captured and wing-broken bird. She stood still, smiling at him until he had finished.

"You don't seem half glad to see me, Mr. Blagg," she remonstrated.

"No!" he answered her, and his voice was tense and strained. "I wish you had never come back. I wish that you had died!"

"Oh, tut, tut," she said, laughing, though a glitter came into her eyes. She was forewarned. "That is not a very cheerful reception. It seems to me that you are becoming old and peevish."

"I am," he asserted. "Lillian —"

"Miss Breed, if you please," she corrected him.

"I'll call you by a less formal name than that if I like," he flared. "I know every step that you took while you were away."

"Indeed?" she said pleasantly, realizing for the first time that there was some basis for the hints that Blagg had often given her of a powerful organization of which he was the head.

Her calmness angered him. "Whatever of awe I ever had for you is gone," he declared. "Whatever of respect I ever had for you is swept away. Whatever of love I felt is dead."

"Then we may be at peace again," she mocked him. "Your awe and your respect and your love were all impertinences. I don't know why I didn't long ago have you discharged."

"I know why you didn't," he replied savagely. "You wanted to keep me here to practise on, and I was willing enough, God knows. But now that I know you for what you are, now that you have made yourself common —"

"Be careful!" she warned him. "It is not safe to talk that way to me."

"Safe or unsafe," he cried, "what do I care? God! I have died a thousand deaths in the past week, and I can not be further harmed."

"Too bad," she murmured in mock sympathy. "Deaths among the lower orders of the animal kingdom seemed quite common last week. They just found one poor fool in the Long Island woods this morning. He looked like a workingman. A revolver was by his side, but he had not been shot. He had been strangled. The marks of strong fingers that must have been enormous were on his throat. His death will probably always remain a mystery. That's a bad place down there. Somebody shot at Kelvin there, earlier in the week, but it was a foolish waste of ammunition. Kelvin bears a charmed life." She was watching Blagg's face narrowly, and for every wince that he gave and tried to conceal, she exulted. "By the way, you have not yet stated what has made this alleged tremendous change in you." She looked at him mockingly, a half smile upon her lips.

"Are you daring me?" he cried, his nervous tension increased to the breaking-point by her recital of the failure of his plans, the first news he had received of it.

"Tell me," she defied him.

"Have you not made yourself Kelvin's mistress?"

He had expected to overwhelm her with this, to meet her indignant denial, to have to brave her fury. Instead, she let her half-veiled eyes rest cruelly upon him, and, looking back over her shoulder at him with that mocking smile still curling her lips, she walked toward the door.

"Yes," she said.

He recoiled as though she had struck him a mortal blow. He sank back in his chair, his hands clenched convulsively, his face turned ghastly pale and its ghastliness heightened by the green glow of the tube, his mouth half parted, his eyes staring fixedly. His breath and even the beating of his heart seemed momentarily to have stopped. Rigid and immovable as he would ever be in death he sat, and from the stairway there floated up to his numbed ears a gay little song that Lillian lightly hummed as she tripped down to the library.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEREIN KELVIN EVICTS ENOUGH VOTERS TO
POPULATE A CITY OF HIS OWN

THE nomination of Kelvin and Rollins came as an astounding surprise to the public, for their names, in connection with the presidency, had been carefully suppressed throughout, though Senator Sawyer's publicity bureau had kept the papers full of both men, in other ways. They were the new economic conscience; they were the new commercial philanthropy; they were the new justice; they were the new foe of the oppressor and friend of the poor. It was retold how Kelvin, with Breed's money back of him, had broken up the iniquitous Stock Exchange and had reassembled it upon a sane basis; how he had, by a magnificent coup, obtained control of all the railroads in the United States and placed that control in the hands of Rollins, who had shattered monopolies right and left and had made equitable freight-rates so that the poor man could ship as cheaply as the large corporations; but above all it was retold, with many embellishments and illustrations, how Kelvin, in-

dividually, had forced Henry Breed to reduce the price of bread permanently from five to four cents a loaf. That was the great story of all; that was the sympathetic story, the heart-appeal story, the story that touched every man's tearful concern for the poor man's pocketbook!

A dozen favorite sons were first put in nomination at the convention, and then, in a neat little speech of forty-five minutes, Senator Killan, recounting the story of the breaking up of the Stock Exchange and of the capture of the railroads, the smashing of the trusts, and the reduction of the price of bread, put up Kelvin's name for consideration. Pandemonium broke loose as per schedule, one of those carefully arranged spontaneous outbursts so dear to American politics, and on its crest the nomination of Kelvin as candidate for the high office of president of the United States, the youngest man ever to achieve that honor, became but a mere counting of long-since-arranged-for ballots; after which the convention, much more calmly and rationally, proceeded to nominate Rollins.

One-half of the public — all of which was surprised at first — received those two names with gasps of gratitude; the other half received them with snarls of scorn, and the campaign was on. Kelvin, refusing to make a mountebank of himself, let his managers fight it out, for he was busy. Out upon

his vast stretches of Long Island waste, spots hitherto dreary beyond imagination, through the spring and the long summer months he wrought a vast miracle; for as if from the very soil there now sprang up a long succession of residence blocks, each surrounded with its cement sidewalk, each containing neat little cement houses molded after the Edison idea, and each house set in a generous plot of ground. Water, light, sewerage, parks, schools, all were provided, as if by magic, and the whole was made easily accessible by the new and wonderful transportation system that Rollins had inaugurated at the same time. As yet, however, except for the vast army of men employed in finishing the work, there were no inhabitants, and the peculiar feature was that the accidental thousands of prospective purchasers and renters of homes could find no real-estate office in all the interminable miles of the attractive new chain of cities.

As soon as the work had begun to assume form its magnitude could not escape the newspapers. Their first two questions were: "What is this?" and "Who is doing it?" To both of these queries Kelvin's publicity bureau had a ready answer: light and air and cleanliness and life for the workingman, at a cheaper price than he paid for darkness and poisoned atmosphere and dirt and death. It was a wonderful story. It went the length and the

breadth of the land, and it lasted, as flaming feature material, all summer and fall. Opposition papers called it politics, but they could not call it cheap politics. It was a project so vast that the very consideration of it made one gasp. Kelvin, appealed to, curtly pointed out that it had been projected long before his name had been mentioned for the nomination, and that it was merely one of Henry Breed's plans for the use of his enormous wealth in ameliorating the condition of mankind; nor did he deny that the undertaking was expected to pay a legitimate rate of interest upon the outlay. He was entirely practical, he stated, and the inference was that he would make an entirely practical president; also a working president, for he was busy right up to the time of election.

As if arranged by Providence, a chance to display his vigorous practicality came just a few days before election. One Pellman, remembered as a once forceful man on Wall Street, then as a "has-been," had suddenly blossomed into the lime-light as the real-estate sensation of New York. Working quietly he had secured options upon tenement-house districts, block after block in extent. Purchasing for cash, he mortgaged and purchased again and mortgaged and purchased again, until he had completed the most gigantic series of deals in the history of the city. Now he announced the formation of

a monster terminal company which should take care of all the freight and passenger transportation entering New York, and the erection of huge structures covering blocks in extent. Immediately following this, notices of eviction were served upon every miserable dweller in the congested tenement districts that he had purchased, dispossess warrants having been secured in various squires' courts by wholesale and in great secrecy. By the one act thousands upon thousands of families were rendered homeless and every newspaper blazed with the wholesale oppression.

Who then came to the rescue? Why, Kelvin! Kelvin, the disburser of Breed's billions; Kelvin, the annihilator of the Stock Exchange; Kelvin, the breaker of trusts; Kelvin, the reducer of the price of bread; Kelvin, the poor man's friend; Kelvin, the candidate for president of the United States!

And he came forward with a project truly Kelvinesque. These people who had nowhere to go, he would take care of every one of them! He would furnish them free transportation for themselves and their goods and chattels. He would at once install each homeless family in a separate little home of its own, free of moving cost; and to avoid any suffering that might be attendant upon the confusion, would stock each house with a week's provisions! Would a summer and fall of campaign

speeches have beaten that? Even Pellman, that wonderful wizard of financeering, admitted that it would not. Already, for the cruel-hearted Pellman, an endless army of bailiffs had begun to empty tenement-building after tenement-building, dumping household goods ruthlessly upon the walks; and in many places, particularly in narrow thoroughfares seldom used for heavy traffic, the rubbish was piled clear out into the middle of the street. No such appalling evidence of the might of wealth, of the power of the rich over the poor, of the ruthless sacrifice of human pawns, had ever been seen in the world. Countless thousands of dazed and helpless families, thrust suddenly homeless into the streets, attached themselves, in pitiful home-instinct, each to a distressful little pile of battered and scratched and splintered and ragged goods, and merely waited in numbed misery. There had been a few fights at first, a few blackened eyes and bloody noses and broken heads, but for the most part these people, aggressive enough individually, were overwhelmed into massed numbness by the very magnitude of the cataclysm. Where wan, thin-legged children had sat on steps and leaned against basement railings and cluttered on fire-escapes, were now only sightless windows and littered doorways, while the streets they mocked were such a chaos of human misery as scarce Doré could have conceived. One

block alone of this would have been enough to sicken the soul of any altruist, but when this block was multiplied by hundreds, such an aggregate of human woe was never realized short of a Pompeiian horror or an Atlantian tragedy. Men and women and children, the aged and the lame and the sick, they were like dumb, driven cattle under the awful power of this devastation, and the composite sound of all their voices was a moan.

This tremendous dislodgment began with the early dawn. Nearing noon, down the first of these narrow, misery-clogged streets there came, with military precision, a strange procession of moving-vans, and, arrived at the first breastworks of household effects, the leader of that procession announced briefly, to those nearest him, the terms of Kelvin's offer.

"Would they go?"

A cheer answered that question, a cheer of mighty relief, as of famished men in sight of water, as of lost souls that had found the gates of paradise; a cheer that was caught up around unseen corners and on far-off streets, that traveled like a tidal wave and redoubled upon itself again and again, that spread in running circles like a mighty splash in a pond, until it had covered all that broad area of desolation and turned its helpless misery into hysterical rejoicing.

There had been no great rioting in the eviction itself, but now it took solid cordons of police to quell the rioting of eagerness that broke forth, the desire that could not wait. Then began the most amazing hegira in the history of civilization. Numbered cards were provided in packs, and the same number was tagged upon all the household goods of a family and upon all its members and upon the van which hauled it. Out into the new cement cities they were carried, into fresh air and clean surroundings and a new life, away from squalor and disease and degradation; and, though dazed by the change, they were different people, and better, for it. So Long Island, for ages useless, was populated. Through the day and the night and the day again and the night, for more than two weeks, this tremendous exodus went on, and an international war, the assassination of a king, the destruction, by flood or fire or earthquake or eruption, of a state, would have had to give way in news value to this tremendous occurrence. Only Patsy McCalken, bereft of his leadership because there was no one to lead, put his stubby finger upon the facts.

“He said he’d take it away from me, and he done it, damn him!” exclaimed Mr. McCalken, half indignantly and half admiringly, his red face puffing redder, and curious little wrinkles forming upon

both sides of the mole on his nose. "Them three districts would 'a' beat Kelvin in this election, and now there won't be enough voters left in the whole abbatoir to wedge a come-on in a vestibule. An' the whole game's a frame-up. Breed's money's back of Kelvin, and it's Breed's money that's back of Pellman; and Breed gets his all out again by sellin' all this property Pellman bought to the railroads. It not only don't cost a cent to make all this election grandstand play from here to 'Frisco, but it makes money! Think o' that, will you! If Kelvin frames up this deal he's a bigger man than Dick Croker; sure he is!"

Nobody, however, paid any attention to Patsy McCalken.

Election night found Henry Breed, as eager in his interest as any child could have been, in New York for the first time in years; and with him came Lillian, Mrs. Rensselaer, Doctor Zelphan, and the usual servants. Two splendid suites on Kelvin's floor at the Esplanade were secured, and the common meeting-point for all of them that night was a magnificent drawing-room upon the corner overlooking the entrance to the park, and also overlooking a moving-picture bulletin which an enterprising newspaper had established there. Breed, apparently made young again by his excitement, and dressed with unusual care at the dictation of his

granddaughter, surveyed Kelvin and Rollins in turn with paternal delight; but he studied both men shrewdly and ended by putting his hand on Kelvin's shoulder.

"My boy, you are made of the right stuff," he announced in his shrill voice. "Here's the man," and he turned to the others, "fitted to sustain a world's crisis. There is no nervousness here, no energy wasted in worry, no flinching, face straight ahead. Fine boy, this Kelvin."

"Throw your chest out, Phillip," drawled Herbert Rensselaer; "a connoisseur in fine boys is addressing you."

"I think he's about right myself," returned Phillip, smiling, until, happening to glance at Rollins, he found his co-candidate regarding him with a thoughtful frown.

There had come some slight coolness between the two men during the closing days of the campaign, not enough to amount to an estrangement, but enough to render them unusually studious of each other. They had never been thoroughly *en rapport*, and now there came a sudden set to Rollins' shoulders and a squaring of his jaw and a narrowing of his eyes that boded ill for the harmony of their future relations. Kelvin caught the look and its significance. Could it be possible, he wondered, that Rollins had been rendered jealous by this

senile praise of Breed's? He dismissed that thought as absurd.

"Really," put in Mrs. Rensselaer, "we are all intensely interested, and even absorbed, in your campaign, Mr. Kelvin. We think it has been very cleverly conducted indeed."

Doctor Zelphan, sitting quietly over in the corner of the big drawing-room, made a sound suspiciously like a snort of hilarious derision, which only Lillian, with an amused glance, caught and interpreted.

"For myself, for Mr. Rollins, and also for Mr. Breed, I thank you," said Kelvin to Mrs. Rensselaer, who he knew hated him; "but we all have to remember that, while the campaign is over, our election is not yet assured, by any means. Mr. Rollins and Mr. Breed and myself, as monopolists and malefactors and capitalists of great wealth and a few other reprehensible things, have come in for some hard scorings in the past few days, and just how much effect that is going to have on the attitude of the public it is hard to tell."

"Huh! It isn't worth considering," said Breed, snapping his lean, long fingers. "Elections are not won on public sentiment alone. Politics is too thoroughly organized for that. Get the leaders who own the little leaders, who, in turn, own the minor workers, clear down to the ward thugs, and you have the country."

"I can not agree with you," broke in Rollins with an amount of vigor which made them all suddenly turn to him, displaying a trifle more than the mere polite and courteous interest they had been paying to one another. "In ordinary times, where nothing is at stake, that might be true," he went on, "but with a vital issue to the fore, the best political machinery in the world must go to pieces. The man who disregards the tremendous, resistless force of public sentiment reckons without the mighty power which has made every important change upon the maps since history began."

"Mercy!" cried Lillian. "How vitally serious we are becoming! I should think it would be great fun to change the maps of the world, but in the meantime there are nearer and dearer things to me; as, for instance, when and where are we to have dinner?"

"Right in this apartment, I think, if Mr. Breed will allow it," said Kelvin with a laugh as he pushed a button. "At least I ordered it to be served here. Bulletins will be coming in before we are even seated, and while the early ones do not amount to much, I am sure we shall all be interested in them. By having the table in this room we can look out at the big bulletin across the street, and no formality is to prevent any of us from rushing out upon our balcony to watch the cheering if there is any un-

usual excitement. In the meantime, suppose we scatter and make ready for dinner as quickly as we can. I ordered it rather early. It should be about ready to serve, and the butler would probably be glad to have this room."

Breed walked out into the hall with Kelvin. "I will be glad when the night is over so I can go back to Forest Lakes," he confided to Phillip. "I can not get out of my mind the fact of all that money there — alone. It — it calls to me, Phillip!"

"Nonsense," replied Kelvin, glancing at him curiously. His conferences with Breed during the closing months of the campaign had been very few and very brief, but, even so, he had noticed a strange development — that the old man was prone to pass from normality to abnormality and back again with not only surprising but discomfoting swiftness; and now he saw in the old man's eyes the dawning of that erratic expression which he had come to dread, largely because it annoyed him, because it interfered with the cool planning and the ready understanding that he wished from this man in his tremendous schemes. "No one knows about it," Kelvin assured him; "and an army could not force the vaults."

"It isn't that," Breed half whispered. "It — it calls to me, I say. I hear it, in tongues of silver and of gold and in soft, silken rustlings, when I try

to sleep away from home. As for safety, it's safe enough, but it — it *calls* me! Not for protection, you know, but for company; just company. Not that it's afraid. It knows that I have guarded it well. I have doubled my force of watchmen around there, did you know? I have almost a regiment; ignorant fellows that I have brought up from the mountains, men who know nothing but how to handle a gun. I have a solid line of them all around the house and all around the walls and all around the drives, with instructions to shoot the first man that comes near." His voice sank to a whisper. "They have shot two in the past month. They dragged them away and buried them at night." Kelvin turned to Breed, shocked and horror-stricken. The old man's eyes were blazing, and his hand, as he laid it upon Phillip's arm, was trembling, not with fright but with some more lustful passion. "Mine is the appointed hand," he went on. "Mine is the appointed hand. From the just wrath of the Most High there is no escape."

"No, I presume not," admitted Kelvin with calmness at least in his voice, as he sought quickly for some means to turn the channel of the old man's thought. He was not sure whether Breed's guards had actually killed two trespassers, but at this juncture he did not much care, the shock once past. In spite of his outward self-possession he was at a high

tension over the outcome of the evening, and was impatient to be by himself for a few moments. "There is not so much to guard as there used to be," he suggested.

The instant change in Breed's countenance assured Kelvin that he had struck the right note.

"No," admitted Breed, shaking his head, "that's true." He seemed quite cast down about it for a moment, then suddenly he chuckled shrilly. "But we'll get it all back, Phillip. It's only an investment, and when you become president and we get a Senate and Congress that we can handle, my vault will receive every cash dollar in the United States. Then we'll see what we shall see," and he bobbed his old bald head like a toy mandarin.

"We shall see what we shall see," repeated Kelvin enigmatically, and turned abruptly toward his suite.

Lillian sweeping down the hall after them, called to Phillip. He waited at his door for her, and Henry Breed, looking at them fondly for a moment, turned back into his own reception-room.

"I've a crow to pick with you," declared Lillian, drawing up closely to Phillip and putting her hand upon his forearm.

"And what is it?" he asked, frowning slightly and making no attempt to conceal it.

"Now don't be cross," she rallied him playfully.

"You haven't been down to see me in a month, and you never have written me a single letter."

"I never put myself on paper," returned Phillip.

"You're a most unsatisfactory lover," she charged, shrugging her shoulders.

Blagg, so gaunt and emaciated that his previous gauntness and emaciation seemed, by contrasted recollection, like plumpness, passed them with a look of concentrated fury; his eyes, sunken deep in their cavities, looked like wells of blackness. Lillian smiled at his malevolence, but Kelvin shook his head.

"I don't like that fellow," he observed. "He's a dangerous man to have around. He's a fool and a fanatic, and there is no telling where and when he will break loose."

"I don't know," Lillian mused. "I believe that all you say about him is true, but I rather like to play with fire, don't you?"

"No," replied Kelvin shortly; "not unless there is a definite end to gain by doing so."

It was Mrs. Rensselaer who rescued Phillip. She could not be comfortable if Lillian was out of her sight for more than a few minutes, especially when Kelvin was in the neighborhood, for the project to have her nephew marry the richest girl in the world never passed from the mind of that indefatigable woman.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MISSING DESK DAGGER REAPPEARS IN A ROLE OF LURID MELODRAMA

WHEN the company sat down to dinner, Kelvin found at his plate the early bulletins which he had directed to be left there. They were returns from scattered precincts and meant nothing as to the general results, but they were all highly favorable to the election of Kelvin and Rollins, and had the effect of starting the dinner with much lightness of spirit. So it was with the bulletins which came for the next hour or so. Blagg himself, swathed in impenetrable gloom, brought them from the adjoining room, into which, for the occasion, private wires had been run for him and an assistant, and through all that long and apparently interminable succession of favorable despatches — during which Breed, more fatigued than he had thought, went to bed — he never lifted his eyes from the floor. At ten o'clock, however, unfavorable bulletins began to come in, one after the other, and Blagg, for the first time, began to raise his eyes from the floor, to square back his shoulders, to tilt his pointed chin.

They were like drafts of strong wine to him, these messages, and as their importance and significance increased, his spirits rose. Senator Sawyer, worried beyond measure by the unexpected development, came bustling into the room.

"I don't understand it," he declared. "You've had against you in this campaign three elements; first, the ordinary opposing politics; second, the corporations; third, class hatred. On the mere matter of partisan politics we win by superior organization. Any effect the corporations may have had against you has been more than offset by the work you've done against them. Class hatred should have been amply overcome by the fact that you have arrayed yourself against your own class, and that all your operations have been in favor of the masses. There is something else behind all this. These adverse reports are from large cities exclusively, and from two parts, congested city districts and outlying districts given over to extremely cheap workingmen's homes. It would look as if the labor vote had suddenly switched."

Lillian, watching Blagg, saw his face light with a malignant smile.

"I can not understand how the labor vote should have been estranged," commented Kelvin slowly; "but, after all, what does it matter? The thing in which I am chiefly interested just now is not cause

but result. We can analyze the situation afterward."

Blagg, still smiling, left the room, returning a moment later with still other depressing news. It was a restless hour that followed. The table had been cleared, only wine and cigars and cigarettes remaining, and Breed's company alternated nervously between the balcony and the table, sitting outside at times to watch the big illuminated screen across the street, and drifting in by twos and threes to resume their places at the table, to talk and sip wine and receive Blagg's messages, and drift again to the balcony. The most of them were inside when, at the end of an hour of almost continued bad news, Blagg brought in a particularly unfavorable telegram, one purporting to come from the national committee and conceding the possible defeat of Kelvin by a narrow margin.

"I'm bound to confess that it looks bad," Kelvin was forced to admit; "but I'm like you, Senator; I can't understand it. I don't see what element could have worked against me."

"I can tell you," suddenly broke in the voice of Blagg, a voice that was shrill in its long-suppressed triumph. "I did it. I am at the head of an organization of a quarter of a million men each one sworn with his life against the principles you represent. I sent them out the word immediately after

your nomination, and once a week since, to vote against you and to work against you tooth and nail, and they have done it. You owe your defeat to me," and he beat both hands upon his chest in his madness of exultation.

Kelvin eyed him coldly. "You were not asked for any comments or explanations, Mr. Blagg," he observed. "For the remainder of the evening you will kindly, and without unnecessary conversation, attend to the duties which permit you to enter this room."

Blagg caught his breath sharply and trembled. His hands clenched convulsively, but suddenly he wheeled and strode from the room.

"The man is telling the truth," said Rollins. "I've heard him talk of this organization before, but I thought it only the boastings of his kind. I am compelled to believe now that his organization actually exists, in the numbers he claims, and that it is effective."

"If it is," declared Kelvin, "I shall make it my business to drag that organization out by the roots!"

A cheer, the first hearty one in a half-hour, attracted them to the balcony. The bulletin across the street was displaying a highly favorable message, which proved to be the turning of the tide. Lillian went into Blagg's room to telephone for

Elsie White. Blagg was in a chair in the corner with his handkerchief to his mouth, and there were red stains upon it. He rose as Lillian entered.

“You may go get that cigar, now,” he said to his assistant, who was at the key. “What did I tell you?” he demanded, turning to Lillian as soon as the operator had gone. “Who has shown the greater power, Kelvin or myself? His star is on the wane and mine in the ascendancy!” he almost shrieked. “This is his last chance. He is through, and it is I who have defeated him. It is only the start of the things I am destined to do, and with your help I can conquer worlds. Lillian, come with me!” He caught her by the shoulder, and, turning to look him clearly in the eyes, she suffered his hand to remain there. “You know where there is a billion and a half dollars *in cash*! With this money we can overturn the entire rotten social and financial and political system of this country, and sway the mightiest empire in the world to our will. I’ve talked of this phase first, because you have not let me talk of love; but now I must speak of it, Lillian! I am dying for the love of you! You have nearly killed me, but, God help me, I’ll take you yet! Come; right now while you have a chance, and we’ll go to Forest Lakes immediately — to-night! I’ve a thousand men where I can mass them in an hour. Come! Kelvin will cast you off like a broken toy.”

Slowly, holding his eyes with her own, Lillian's hand crept up to her shoulder. He thought, as he saw it slipping upward, that she had intended to rest her palm upon his own hand, but instead she placed the point of a pin upon one of his gaunt knuckles and twirled it! Out of all the devilment that lay in her she had selected this trifling action as being the most contemptuous within her invention, and, laughing in his face, she swept from the room and sent a page for Elsie. She rejoined the others upon the balcony, laughing from sheer light-heartedness, and nestled down in a chair close by Phillip, who sat upon the rail. In the dinness she even rested her forearm across his knee and shared with the others their increasing pleasure in the returns from outlying country districts, where the vote had been almost to a man for Kelvin and Rollins. Occasionally bulletins were brought to them and read aloud to them from the open window, but Blagg no longer appeared, the messages now being brought by his assistant. Slowly the lost ground was regained. The returns from the districts where Blagg's influence had been paramount, if he had told the truth, were apparently all in, and from midnight it was but a mere matter of the slow rolling up of a majority. By one o'clock the election of Kelvin and Rollins was assured beyond all possibility of a doubt, and telegrams of congratulation began to

pour in; and, tired but exultant, the watchers came in from the balcony. Rollins, as he entered the room, turned and shook hands with Kelvin.

"Well, we've won," said he. "It seems that Mr. Blagg's organization of patriots was not so powerful after all."

"Blagg!" exclaimed Senator Sawyer, and laughed heartily. "Wasn't that a curious thing? I shall always remember your man Blagg."

"Yes, you shall remember Blagg, all of you!" shrieked a voice, and, turning, they saw the tall, thin form of the wireless operator standing in the doorway. Before any one could divine his intention he had sprung at Phillip.

Something glittered in the light as he raised his arm, and flashed as he brought it down; and Kelvin dropped to the floor. Blagg sprang for the door to the hall, but met Sam coming in, and Sam, seeing Phillip lying upon the floor, required no explanation. In an instant, for the second time in their two lives, his hands were about Blagg's throat, and he bore him to the floor, where, snarling and moaning like a wild beast tearing at its live quarry, he began that work of barbarity for which his blood was always lustful. Horror-stricken, Sawyer and Rensselaer and Zelphan and the attending butler rushed to drag Sam away from his victim, while Rollins turned his attention to Phillip. It had all happened in an in-

stant — the stabbing of Phillip, Sam's assault upon Blagg, and the piling of the other men upon Sam — and in that instant Elsie White had shrieked and thrown herself upon her knees beside Phillip's prostrate form.

"Phillip!" she cried in anguish, and in that cry the secret of her heart was made known; all the pent-up love that she had felt for him and had hidden revealed itself in that wailing call upon his name.

Lillian Breed, her face inflamed with sudden passion, leaned over the girl, and, grasping her by the shoulders, shook her violently and hissed a word in her ear that made Elsie, lost to her surroundings as she was, recoil and crimson and spring to her feet. Lillian followed her up in a storm of passion and upbraided her with foul insinuations, discharged her, and called upon a page to have the girl thrown bodily into the street.

In the meantime Phillip had opened his eyes, and a moment later raised himself to his elbow, feeling at his heart. Rollins helped him to a sitting position, just in the midst of the pandemonium, when Sam was being torn away from Blagg and Lillian was wreaking her fury upon Elsie.

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Rollins.

"No, I think not," replied Phillip, dazed. "I think I was only stunned by the force of the blow.

I doubt if I even have a flesh wound," and taking Rollins' hand he rose to his feet and sat in a chair.

It was in that moment that Rollins saw Lillian raise her hand to strike Elsie, and he sprang in between them, putting a protecting arm around Elsie's shoulder.

Lillian laughed shrilly. "It seems that my clever little strumpet has aroused the gallantry of more than one of my friends," she charged.

"No," returned Rollins calmly, "I only love her, and I'm going to call a cab and send her over to my mother at the Hotel Spuyten."

The disturbance rose anew in the group about the door. Rensselaer and Doctor Zelphan had Sam on the floor on his back, struggling and sobbing and begging to be let go that he might "drink Blagg's blood." Senator Sawyer and the attending butler had raised Blagg to his feet and stood with him near the door. He was ashen white and was quivering all over. His hands were at his throat, and he was gasping for breath. Thin little streams of blood were running down the corners of his mouth.

"Send for a policeman," the butler ordered the bewildered page.

"No," interposed Kelvin. "Don't do that. Let the man go. It is not good policy to have this known."

Sawyer, panting for breath, nodded his head vigorously. "You are quite right, Mr. Kelvin," said he, and stepped away from Blagg's side.

"You are letting me go at your own peril," warned Blagg, gasping out the words with a difficulty that contorted his face. But he had abated no particle of his rage.

"If you stay it will be at yours," returned Phillip and got upon his feet.

As he did so something heavy and metallic and bright dropped to the floor. Blagg took a step forward, stopped, laughed bitterly and tottered out into the hall.

Kelvin stooped and picked up the object that had fallen. It was the heavy paper-weight dagger that Blagg had stolen from Phillip's desk a year before, and its point had now clung in Kelvin's clothing until this movement. Phillip held it up by its tip.

"That's twice this thing has threatened me," said he, "and each time it has failed. I think I shall keep it as my emblem and my talisman."

An unusual commotion arose in the street, and glancing out the window, they saw flashed upon the bulletin the announcement that both Kelvin and Rollins were in the rooms exactly opposite the screen. There were loud cheers and calls for Kelvin. He looked inquiringly at Senator Sawyer.

"It's none of my doing," declared the senator,

“but there was no keeping it from them all night. I only wonder they didn’t find you before. You’d better show yourself and say a few words, I guess.”

Kelvin advanced hesitatingly to the window and held out his hand for Rollins to come with him. Before he emerged upon the balcony, he turned and once more held up the dagger. He noticed as he did so, however, that it stood in the shape of a cross, and he immediately reversed it, with the glittering point in the air.

“‘In this sign I conquer,’” he laughingly quoted, and then he went out upon the balcony to exhibit himself as president-elect of the United States.

CHAPTER XXIV

PRESIDENT KELVIN ASSURES HERBERT RENSSELAER
THAT HE HAS NO CLAIM ON LILLIAN

SENATOR Sawyer, after having awaited his turn for nearly an hour in the outer offices, came red-faced with anger into the presence of President Kelvin.

"By George, it's true!" he spluttered, looking about him. "At first I thought it a newspaper joke, but it's true!"

"What is this amazing truth?" asked Kelvin quietly.

"Why, that you are polluting the White House with all the pomp and trappings of actual royalty!"

The portly senator, who had thriven upon blatant democracy all his life, who declaimed it from public platforms and flaunted it in public print at every opportunity, who wore ready-made clothing back home but maintained a most aristocratic establishment in Washington, pursed up his lips and glared about him in fine indignation. A low platform had been erected in the end of this apartment, and upon it stood a richly carved, flat-top mahogany desk,

while behind this sat Kelvin in an enormous high-backed chair, strikingly suggestive of a throne. On one side of him stood Sam, and on the other a huge, ebony black negro exactly matching Sam except for that livid scar upon his ugly left cheek. Both of them were clad in blue-and-gold liveries which matched the decorations, the rich tapestry, and the heavy rug, and of which they were conspicuously proud. Besides Phillip's there was not another chair in the apartment, it being the obvious intent that visitors should stand! This, for the senator, was the last straw.

"I do not understand what you mean by it," Mr. Sawyer went on, contracting his bushy white eyebrows. "The entire press of the country is aflame with it. When I picked up my paper in Chicago yesterday morning, and read of the alterations you had made, I was astounded. I took the first train out and came straight here."

"Very prompt and decisive in you, I am sure," returned Kelvin with open sarcasm.

"Prompt and decisive action is necessary to save the party," the senator hotly retorted; "and the country," he added as an after-thought. "While you were installing yourself in all this extravagant claptrap, I saw, as I went to the train in Chicago, that monster parade of the unemployed. This morning I read of the brutal and unprovoked police at-

tack upon them, of the riot which followed, of the calling out of the state troops, of the killing of a score of men, and of your edict late last night placing the city under martial law. That is a long score added to your account, Kelvin. To the twenty killed in Chicago add the seventeen killed in Philadelphia, the nine in Cincinnati, and the six in St. Louis, and you have more than I would care to carry on my conscience."

"What did you come to see me about, Senator?" demanded Kelvin coldly. "You will please make your errand known as directly and as briefly as possible. There are many others waiting."

"I came to protest against your entire administration!" blazed Sawyer, fanning himself into an excellently dramatic fury. "Before your nomination, to gain the influence of certain powerful corporations, you had Vice-President Rollins, as manager of the united railroad system of the United States, give them valuable rebate concessions. Since your election you have, through Pellman, who succeeded Rollins as czar of the railroads, stopped every concession, and forced a perfect riot of restrictive legislation. By that means you have scattered into small units every influential combination in the country, with the result that the unthinking people hailed you as the King of Trust-Killers. They are now beginning to see their folly

—and yours. With your railroad policy, legislative meddling, and artificially produced money stringency, you have stopped mills and factories by the hundred, and have disrupted the entire industrial system of the country.”

“Precisely what was needed,” was the surprising reply. “Next will come the readjustment. We shall return to the era of smaller competitive concerns and a far better distribution of wealth.”

“I do not believe it,” snapped the senator. “To me such conditions would look like going backward. Left to itself, the trust and combine and monopoly situation would work out its own salvation, for these aggregations of units were in the line of logical commercial progress; but while we stand here arguing this purely abstract question, there are hundreds of thousands of workmen out of employment, and the number of this vast, hungry army is increasing every day at an appalling rate. While you sit here in oriental splendor, backed by Henry Breed’s billions and worth money enough in your own name to buy you food and clothing and fuel and a roof for your head for a thousand years — if you should live that long — a hundred thousand men are on the verge of starvation. They are desperate men, and some relief must be offered them at once. What are you going to do about it?”

“Go right on with my program,” announced

Kelvin calmly, picking up from his desk a heavy paper-knife made in the shape of a dagger and toying with it.

“You will not go right on with it!” declared the senator, striking his closed fist upon a corner of Kelvin’s desk. Upon his rotund cheeks a fine network of veins sprang suddenly red. “You’re going to have a revolt on your hands in both the Senate and House.”

“And I suppose that you will lead the revolt in the Senate,” suggested Kelvin quietly.

“If need be, sir!” thundered the senator. “I know at what you are hinting — that my self-interest will stand in the way; but I hope, sir, I am sufficiently patriotic that when my country calls I shall answer her cry of distress.”

“Exactly,” rejoined Phillip dryly. “I would expect nothing else from a gentleman of your well-known patriotism. I can imagine you responding, in clarion tones, to your country’s cry of distress, and being echoed by columns upon columns of excellent publicity. In the meantime you owe considerable personal debts of which I could almost give you an accurate scale; you are hard pressed at this moment for money; you have a stiff mortgage on your house in Washington and an equally heavy one on your place out West, both of which mortgages have eventually found their way into the

hands of Mr. Breed, which, perhaps, you did not know."

Senator Sawyer was shocked into highly uncomfortable silence.

"You, at least, are not going to revolt," went on Phillip, "and I might say, in passing, that whatever feeble attempt at insubordination manifests itself, in either house, will be promptly and effectively extinguished. In other words, Senator, if you came here representing any clique or combination of law-peddlers, you may go back and tell them that I intend to have my way, first, last, and all the time! I know precisely what I am doing, and I shall not permit any interference. Did you come upon any other errand?"

The senator's red-faced rage had given way to pale-faced apprehension.

"About those mortgages," he said, shifting uneasily. "I don't suppose that there will be any present trouble about them."

"I couldn't say, I'm sure," returned Kelvin. "You'll have to see the head of Mr. Breed's real-estate department about that."

The senator, much crest-fallen and quite a different man from the one who had come in to give Kelvin a piece of his mind, was about to retire when Phillip stopped him.

"By the way, Senator," he offered, "if you

should need any ready cash my private purse is open to you to the extent of, say, a thousand."

The senator wheeled instantly. Upon his shoulders there always pressed a burden of urgent small bills that worried him far more than the heavy mortgages which he was unable to cancel. They were, in fact, unbearable, and he was habitually in the position of being almost willing to barter away his soul to be delivered from under them.

"If you *can* accommodate me with a trifling temporary loan — of a thousand for sixty days, say — I would appreciate it very much," he said, smiling ingratiatingly.

"No trouble at all," said Phillip pleasantly, and immediately began writing out a check.

The senator was followed by a procession of office-seekers and favor-hunters of whom Kelvin disposed briefly, and then came Rollins. The vice-president, in his year of office, had undergone as striking a change as the president. Upon Kelvin's clean-cut features there sat a new sternness, born of a determination which never faltered by day or by night. With Rollins the change was one of gravity rather than of sternness, and much recent worry had left him pale.

"Kelvin, we have been wrong from the first," he confessed, after brief greetings. "You are carrying out many of the alleged reforms over which we

talked, but they are not reforms. The ultimate aim was right, but the means are wrong. They are too violent, too drastic, and they have only succeeded in disturbing the economic system to an appalling extent."

"Not to any greater extent than I had calculated," returned Kelvin. He appeared much more anxious, by his tone, to convince Rollins than he had been to appease Senator Sawyer. "This confusion must prevail in the interim between the passing away of the old order of things and the institution of the new. You will see that the period of suffering will be but a brief one, and that we shall emerge from the entire revolution — for it amounts to nothing less — upon a sounder basis than any commonwealth in the history of the world, with a larger ultimate percentage of happiness than heretofore enjoyed by any state."

Rollins shook his head. "You are mistaken," said he earnestly. "No peaceable economic readjustment is possible when any large number of the members of the body politic have reached the stage of starving desperation."

"You don't see very far, Rollins," replied Kelvin patiently. "You are basing all your calculations for new emergencies upon old principles. You are trying to find compound interest by the formula for cube root. Has it ever occurred to you that the solu-

tion of all our economic difficulties might be found in an entirely new system of government?"

Rollins looked at him steadily while a slow flush mounted to his forehead. "Kelvin," said he, very gravely, "this is not the first time I have heard you hint at such things. One of my ancestors assisted in the drafting of the constitution of the United States, and signed it. Several of them fought to uphold it. It is the most perfect in conception, the broadest in humanitarianism, the most complete in wisdom, of any human document upon which a state was ever founded. If it is tampered with in any way, or if any attempt is made to supplant it, I warn you that the sons of the men who framed it and who died for it will rise up to defend it in a righteous wrath second only to the rage of the Almighty; and by the eternal God I will be foremost among their number!"

There was no bombast about his statement. He had scarcely raised the pitch of his voice, and yet there was in his tone such deadly earnestness that Kelvin, accustomed to treating his advisers and his dissenters alike with half-concealed contempt, was bound to pay him serious attention.

"You are far too logical a man, Rollins, to speak in definite judgment upon a problem until you know its full conditions," he protested. "I do contemplate a change, and a radical one, in our type of

government. That change can only be made possible of success, it can only result in the greatest good to the greatest number, by its being fostered and upheld and set in motion by men of tried and tested probity, ability, and strength. Among such men I count you. I rely upon your support, and I want to tell you that if this change seems feasible, I have in store for you a far higher office than the one you hold now, one far more important and powerful for good than the one even I hold at the present time."

Rollins glanced about the room with contempt. "I do not want it," he declared, "nor do I wish to be taken any further into your confidence. Any system of government which needs to be supported by force — else why the enormous standing army you are now accumulating? — must result in oppression, tyranny, and ultimate failure. I know now that any change in government which you would propose would be a retrogression, and for my part I shall resist every such change, even to the minutest degree, with every atom of my will, with every breath of my voice, with every drop of blood in my body!"

"Precisely why I want you with us," returned Kelvin with the remarkable patience possessed only by men of one dominating idea to which everything else is subservient. "I like your principles and the

way you present them, but I hope yet to show you why, not from self-interest but from humanitarian motives, you should approve the course I propose." He was silent and thoughtful for a moment. Both by instinct and experience he knew Rollins to be of tremendous personal force. "I'll talk with you again about this. In the meantime is there nothing I can do for you in the way of appointments or something of the sort?"

"Nothing whatever," said Rollins shortly, and left the room.

He was followed immediately by Herbert Rensselaer, who came in so briskly that one who had known him in his dawdling club days would scarcely have recognized him now. On him a year of office as Secretary of War had wrought wonderful maturity.

"Hello, Phillip the First," said he, advancing to the desk and shaking hands heartily with Kelvin.

"I wish you wouldn't use that form of address," protested Phillip quietly. "You might say it in the wrong place. How goes the enrolment?"

"Splendidly," returned Rensselaer with enthusiasm. "The army of the unemployed is rapidly becoming the Army of the Republic. The increase of my enlistment is almost in exact proportion to the decrease in industry, almost in exact proportion to the increase in riots, and our recruiting-stations

are really busier places than the bread-stations. Kelvin, to-day you are commander-in-chief of an army of nearly half a million men."

"And still we have not enough," declared Kelvin. "I must have the largest army in the world; the largest army in the world." He was not addressing Rensselaer now, but himself; lost in vast speculation, he fell into musing silence.

"By the way, old chap," ventured Rensselaer presently, "I'd like to speak with you about a rather delicate matter, one I wouldn't dream of mentioning if it were not for our long friendship during and since the old cowboy days. It's about Miss Breed. Er — now don't take this amiss, Phill — are you contemplating anything serious in that direction?"

Kelvin was silent for so long that Herbert began to think he had not heard, but presently he answered, "Nothing whatever."

"Sure?" Herbert asked.

"Absolutely," Kelvin replied.

"Thank you," said Herbert slowly. "Rather a caddish question, I know, Phill, but between us —" He, too, lapsed into troubled silence.

Kelvin seemed to be about to say something more, but he did not.

CHAPTER XXV

TWO GENTLEMEN MAKE MARRIAGE PROPOSALS, AND
DOCTOR ZELPHAN POINTS OUT AMERICA'S DISEASE

“**S**AM, do you think that in a fight I could rely on your brother Peavy as I could on you?” asked Kelvin as he was dressing for dinner that night.

“’Deed Ah doan’ know, sah,” answered Sam, putting the studs in Phillip’s shirt. “He’s kin’ o’ no ’count anyhow. When Ah foun’ ’im in Philandelpy he look jes’ lak one o’ dem cotton-field han’s, widout’n no clothes ’ceptin’ ’bout two rags an’ a string, an’ he wah a-loafin’ roun’ one o’ these hyah low-down holes whar they sell nigger gin fo’ three cents. O’ co’s’e, senct he’s got on fahn clothes an’ is one o’ yo’ body sehvants, he’s feelin’ maghty biggity; but Ah doan’ reckon Ah’d place too much ’liance on Peavy in a pinch.”

“Well, we’ll keep him for his looks then,” said Kelvin, laughing. “You want to be careful, though, that he doesn’t steal Lucy from you.”

“Lucy! Huh!” grunted Sam, brushing the last speck of dust from Kelvin’s pumps. “Ef that

wuthless coon eveh tuhns up the whites o' his eyes t'wahd Lucy, Ah's goan t' breck ev'y bone in his body. Heh — heh! Lucy!" and Sam grinned until the scar on his cheek bent itself into the shape of a sickle.

"You don't want to be too sure, Sam," cautioned Kelvin, fastening his collar. "Peavy's as big as you are to the exact inch, and I imagine he weighs as much as you to the exact pound. Do you think you could whip him?"

"Whip 'im!" repeated Sam. "Why, Mistuh Phillip," he went on earnestly and with absolute conviction, "yo' see them two han's o' mine? Well, sah, wid them two han's Ah kin lick ary man in all this worl'!"

Kelvin, however, tiring of the banter, had strayed to the table in the corner of his dressing-room, where lay spread out one of the inevitable diagrams with which he had planned all his projects; a huge white sheet of cardboard, with an outline map of the United States drawn upon it, and with figures here and there contiguous to large cities. Over these he studied as he mechanically adjusted his tie.

"Sam, in the inside pocket of the coat I just took off, you will find some reports given to me by Mr. Rensselaer," he presently directed. "Bring them here." From the papers Sam brought, he entered some figures on the diagram, and once more re-

viewed the entire situation. So many troops massed here, so many there, so many in that other place, at stations scattered thickly from coast to coast and from Lakes to Gulf; grand total so many. He nodded his head in satisfaction, sweeping his eye over his diagram. It became no longer a mere square of white cardboard, but a vast, populous, fertile country, comprising hills and meadows and lakes, mountains and plains and mighty rivers, cities and villages and rural homes; a land of boundless extent, of boundless resources, of boundless wealth and beauty; and over this, all this, he had domain! The little points upon his map were no longer mere figures, but regiments of stalwart men clad in the khaki of the United States government. He could hear the tramp of their feet, the click of their guns, the clank of their sabers. The ground shook under their rhythmic tread, while nations heard and trembled; and these, all these, were of his dominion!

As he finished the last touch of his dressing he walked to the window. The twilight had fallen, and above him in the dusky sky there shone out one solitary silver star, as if it might be the star of his destiny! He smiled at the absurd thought, and yet, accepting the star as at least a symbol of his fate, his soul went out to it, swollen with dreams too great, too vast, too daring for utterance; dreams

that he dare not even speak aloud to himself lest he should incur his own ridicule. An insatiate ambition had taken possession of him. It had always been there, he realized now, but it had grown with his years and his opportunities. It had grown until it encompassed the seas and the land beyond, until it encircled the earth, and, finding there not sufficient food for its boundless hunger, swept on, like the dreams of Alexander, to other worlds, to other universes, to the conquest even of yon bright star! Suddenly, laughing aloud at the folly of his own immeasurable fancies, he wheeled, and, slipping on the outer coat that Sam held for him, took his hat and left the room.

At the porte-cochère he found waiting a limousine, with an open car before and behind it, each of these extra cars carrying four silent and alert members of the secret service. Peavy already sat beside the chauffeur of the limousine, and Sam followed Kelvin into it, upon which all three of the autos moved away. Just beyond Dupont Circle they were delayed by a congestion of carriages and limousines in front of an ambassadorial residence. Kelvin glanced idly at the stream of entering guests and then turned his attention to the house next door, which was the one occupied by Rollins and his mother. In the entrance, under the brilliant illumination of the vestibule light, stood a girl whom, with

a sudden painful stirring at his heart, he recognized as Elsie White, now Mrs. Rollins' companion. She had loved him, this girl, loved him, he knew, with an unselfish heart ever since he had been a penniless prospector years before; loved him yet, he was sure; and he had neglected this gift, had thrown it away! There had come upon him latterly, intruding itself between and among his stupendous ambitions, a strange, new sense of loneliness. Then, too, perhaps, that other dalliance in which the strength of his virility and the madness of his blood had permitted him to indulge, had taught him to value the worth and the purity of this girl and her heart.

With a feeling of poignant jealousy, in the detection of which he was impatient with himself, he inspected the man who was talking with her. The man's back was to the street, and he was rather short and heavy-set. Kelvin could not make him out, though he seemed familiar. Another man, tall and thin and walking with a quick, nervous stride, came up and spoke to the two in the doorway. The heavy-set man turned, and Kelvin recognized in him Elsie's father, but he turned quickly from his inspection of this man to the new one, whose gaunt features, as they revealed themselves in the light, proved to be those of George Blagg. Kelvin, from within his closed car, saw White start away with Blagg, and Elsie apparently striving to coax him

back. She even came out to the edge of the walk and put her hand upon his arm. Blagg, however, stepped roughly between them, and taking White's arm walked away with him. An opening was made just then in the crush of carriages, and Kelvin's cars moved on.

They stopped again before a magnificent residence recently vacated by a notorious railroad senator who had not been "found available." Here Kelvin, attended by two of his guards, ascended the broad flight of stone steps, while Sam, released for the time being, hurried back to the rear of the house in search of Lucy. Leaving his secret service men at the door, Kelvin found awaiting him, in the garishly decorated library, Henry Breed. The old man seemed shrunken since Kelvin had last seen him, and his bald head exhibited a slight tendency to nod rhythmically. His eyes were bright and keen and shrewd, however, as he sat eagerly waiting for this caller.

"Well, how goes it, my boy?" he asked in his senile old voice, rubbing his withered hands together.

"Beyond our expectations, I think," replied Kelvin. "The country is coming to exactly that state of chaos where it can be handled. There is not a city nor a village but is in a state of turmoil and panic, and ready for anything, just so it is a change.

I am having a little trouble in forcing through the army and navy appropriations, but I shall get precisely what I want, which is an absolutely free hand. The enlistment is proceeding even more rapidly than I had hoped. Within three months more I shall have the largest and most efficient army ever placed under the control of one man."

"Excellent!" said Breed. "Excellent! And then, Kelvin, things must be settled very quickly; very quickly indeed. My cash supply is not increasing. It stands now but a trifle over a billion and a half. Why, even the government could, if it chose, control nearly as much cash as I can. This unsettled condition, of course, is the means to an end, but in the meantime it is very bad for business. Very bad."

"I don't think we'll attempt to accumulate much more cash for a long time," announced Kelvin. "In fact, I think that after things are settled down we'll let go of some of it."

"Let go of it!" protested Breed, becoming instantly excited. "Impossible! Impossible! Why, the very backbone of all our operations, all the force that has made us, all the power which has given us control of public utilities, private business, and government itself, is locked up in that impregnable vault beneath my cellar at Forest

Lakes! And would you destroy this tremendous dynamo by weakening it?"

"No," said Phillip dryly. "I do not aim to destroy it. I only aim to use it. I can guarantee you that I shall propose nothing that would lessen my own grasp of public affairs."

Breed was thoughtful for a moment, and then he chuckled and nodded his head voluntarily, his parchment-like face breaking into leathern wrinkles. "I guess you are right, my boy," he admitted. "I haven't seen you do anything yet that would lessen your own power; nor mine," he added, "nor mine. You have been doing wonderfully well, Phillip — wonderfully well. But come with me; I have a surprise for you."

Up into his own suite — rooms, all of them, too ornate and gay and young of color for the occupancy of rusty old Henry Breed — he led Kelvin, and from the bottom of one of his trunks he took a heavy robe of carmine velvet and ermine, with childish delight drawing its luxurious folds around his tall and stooping body. From the hat-box of his trunk he took a wonderful creation in gold and jewels and set it upon his head. He brought forth a rod of polished ebony tipped with gold and set with one huge, glittering diamond in its end, then stood, half simpering, before Kelvin, accoutered

royally with robe and scepter and crown. Kelvin could scarcely repress a smile, and yet, with all apparent seriousness, he nodded his head in grave approval. These baubles seemed to change the current of Breed's thought.

"The Lord's anointed," he quavered, holding forth his scepter in an unsteady hand. "Mine is the appointed hand to chastise my people for their follies and their ingratitude. Mine is the hand to humble them. Mine is the hand to set them anew in the paths of peace and plenty."

Into his eyes had come that dilation of the pupils which Kelvin recognized instantly as a return of that more and more frequent erraticism.

"It is a very handsome outfit, and must have cost a fortune," commented Kelvin briskly. "You don't want to keep them here, however."

"No," agreed Breed. "I only wanted to show them to you. I just got them to-day from Tiffany's, to—to have them handy when the time comes, you know." He had sunk his voice here to a whisper. "I had intended to take them to Forest Lakes," he went on, "but—but we might want them suddenly, and I'll just put them away here. I've made a hiding-place since I bought this house for Lillian. I found I could not do without secret quarters somewhere. I can trust you, of course; but only you and Lillian."

He waited anxiously for Kelvin to reassure him of this, and then took a big suit-case from a closet in his room and hurriedly packed the expensive gauds into it.

"By the way, Phillip," said he in an unusually wheedling tone, "how much money have you with you?"

"I don't know," returned Kelvin, a trifle surprised. "A little over a hundred, I think."

"You won't need it to-night, I am sure," said Breed. "You can get some any place when you go out, if you do."

"Yes," assented Kelvin, reaching his hand in his pocket.

"I have need for a little ready cash," Breed stated expectantly; "just a little ready cash."

He took the money eagerly and counted it over and over.

"One hundred and fourteen dollars," said he, stuffing it deeply into his pocket. "You may just charge this to my account."

He picked up the suit-case hurriedly.

"Go down to the library," he directed. "I'll return in a few moments," and he started through the hall toward the back stairway.

Phillip stood looking after him a moment, puzzled, and as Breed turned the corner Doctor Zelphan came from a room opposite. He too looked

at the retiring form of Breed and then turned his thick spectacles in Kelvin's direction.

"Did he borrow any money of you?" he asked abruptly, every hair of his flaming beard apparently pointing outward in indignant query.

"One hundred and fourteen dollars," replied Kelvin, smiling.

"I knew it," declared Zelphan. "Don't let him have any more. The man has gone money-mad. Do you know that on account of all that cash he has stored in his vault at Forest Lakes he can't stay here more than two days at a time? Even while he is here he must have a secret hoard to gloat over, and has built him a steel vault in the cellar, protected by three combination locks. Every time he sees a dollar of cash he must have it. He borrows my salary from me regularly, sometimes the very day he pays it to me. He borrows money from Mrs. Rensselaer, from Rollins, from Herbert, from his granddaughter, even from the servants, and every penny of it he hoards. When any of them protests he reluctantly pays it back by check."

"I did not know that he was so weak," said Kelvin shocked. "I have been aware that the condition was growing upon him, but I had no idea that he had gone so far with his eccentricities."

"Eccentricities!" snorted the doctor. "He's

crazy; crazy as a loon. You're all crazy, the whole crowd of you, victims of the American craving for what you call success. Breed is mad for money; Mrs. Rensselaer is mad for social position; her nephew is mad for military conquest; Blagg is mad for notoriety; Lillian Breed is a neurotic, mad of itching nerves, of passion and of lust. You are the maddest of them all; mad with the thirst for power! You are representative, each of you, of your whole nation, which knows no peace, no content, no victory; for one battle gained forms only a vantage point for further warfare, until you die! Your entire race is neurasthenic and, combating this, eaten alive of a wild scramble for you know not what. It is going to end in a crash, with all your institutions, all your ideals, all your ends and aims and ambitions clattering down about your ears, the most thoroughly shattered and crumbled wreck and ruin of a social structure in the history of the world. As nations have risen, so have they fallen. Those that have been the most rapid in their rise to supremacy have been the most rapid in disintegration. The trouble with America is that its speed revolutions have been so accelerated that at last the fly-wheel is bound to burst. Already your pro-rata birth-rate is decreasing, and would be much more rapidly decreased were it not for the constant

influx of virile foreigners of the lower or breeding class. A century will see America as sterile as France."

Kelvin nodded his head with an emphatic jerk. "There is nothing new or startling in your theories, but in the main they are correct," he admitted. "That is precisely why there must be an utter change in our entire social system. But this is rather a surprising outbreak on your part, Doctor. I did not know that you had devoted so much thought to these things," and Phillip's lips curved in a smile of mild amusement.

"Bah!" exploded the doctor, snapping the fingers of both hands. "I don't talk all I think. I have talked too much now, but in my desk I have manuscripts so thick," and with his hands he indicated a pile nearly a foot high. "It is my great book on national neuroticism. I came to America to study it. Mr. Breed, who was losing his physical and mental equipoise and knew it, heard of me and sent for me. Do you suppose that I would have taken the position of house physician to him if I had not found clustered about him exactly the material I wished for my book on alienism? No! I have spent a lifetime on neural deterioration considered from a racial standpoint. I spent a year and a half in China, one in Japan, one in Russia, three in France, two in England, and five years scattered about in

other parts of Europe and Asia. Now I am nearly four years in America. I shall wait till Henry Breed dies. He will die in a year, or possibly two. Then I shall spend two or three years in travel among the uncivilized peoples and go back to Switzerland to publish my great work. I shall die myself soon after that. I, too, have a fatal nervous disease, but it can not kill me before five years, and I can not live beyond seven. But my book will live. That will be the valuable part of Doctor Zelphan. Immortality of the soul? No. Immortality of the body? No. Immortality of the brain? Yes. For ever!"

"Possibly," agreed Phillip dryly. "No doubt, Doctor, your work will be accepted as a standard. No doubt it will prove a vast revelation to the medical fraternity and to a few students of sociology. Five years afterward some other savant will write another four-volume work upsetting all your theories, and five years after that somebody will mention your name to a noted alienist or student of neurotics and he will say: 'Zelphan? Doctor Zelphan? Um-m-m-m, the name seems a trifle familiar. Didn't he discover one of those exploded serum treatments or something?'"

"Bah!" snapped the doctor, and his red beard, now beginning to streak with gray, seemed to turn redder from the redness of his face behind it.

“Bah!” he repeated, but this time the exclamation was weaker, and Phillip, as he went down-stairs, felt a prick of compunction at having hit the doctor such a vital blow.

Phillip found the library deserted and sat down with his back to the door to examine a volume on numismatics that lay open upon the table. Soft hands were suddenly pressed over his eyes, and as he took them quietly away a velvet cheek nestled down against his own. Knowing well whom he should see, he turned to find Lillian Breed, bewitchingly handsome and gowned in a marvelous creation of lace, smiling into his eyes. She leaned forward and, clasping him about the shoulders, pressed her lips warmly to his. At the touch all in him that responded to her leaped up, and for a moment he crushed her in his arms and returned her kiss with something akin to fierceness. Then he thrust her away from him almost roughly.

“You are most indiscreet,” he protested, looking at the wide-open door.

“Why not?” she demanded, laughing. “If somebody stepped in upon us we should only have to make an announcement.”

He winced involuntarily at that, and she saw it. Lillian, after years of almost hopeless training, had at last made her *début*, and she had dazzled all Washington by her vivacity, her wit, her beauty —

charms that were in no wise impaired by the fact that she was the granddaughter and only heir of the richest man the world had ever known. She could pick and choose as she would, and, impelled by the riot of her always wayward senses, had cast the eye of coquetry upon a score of eager suitors; but here was the only one among them all, and him by no means a suitor, who had the power to hurt her as she was now hurt. There had been that between them, too, which makes a woman fonder and a man more careless. For a moment she laid her hands upon her breast, but she was surprised to find that there came no hot retort, usually so ready upon her lips. Without effort, without exerting himself to do so, Kelvin had for the time being tamed the wild panther within her, and her only impulse she found to be one of conciliation. The quick instinct came within her that she must charm him anew or she would lose him, and that her physical charm, though it had not lost its potency, would not be enough. She had won him once, but by unwise methods, for in winning him she had lost him, and she must win him again. She smiled up at him, her swift wit settling upon the quick change of topic that might interest him in her mental qualities; but prompt as she was there came an interruption in the person of Doctor Zelphan, who called Phillip peremptorily.

"I want to show you something," he said to Phillip at the door. "Breed is down in his vault dressed in all the gaudy mummery of a lodge initiation, squatted flat on the floor, with money scattered all about him and his old Bible before him on a chair, like a Voodoo idol; and he is jabbering garbled texts that in his interpretation are worse than blasphemy."

Lillian, left to herself, stood a moment, her breast heaving, and then dropped into the chair that Kelvin had vacated and grew deeply thoughtful. She had scarcely moved when, at the end of about twenty minutes, Herbert Rensselaer was announced. Arousing herself at once she received him with her usual vivacity. It was he who was the one ill at ease, and presently he broke into the frothy conversation in which they were indulging, with a much more serious note.

"It is a pleasure to find you alone," he observed. "You are so very popular that an edgewise word with you is a rare boon."

"This is Mr. Kelvin's night," she reminded him. "As Phillip Kelvin we could entertain him with the usual crush that Mrs. Rensselaer has managed to secure for us, but as the president, his dinners with my grandfather have to be entirely private and almost incognito."

"I don't think the credit for the 'usual crush'

should be given so much to my aunt as to yourself," objected Herbert. "You've made yourself the sensation of Washington."

"No," Lillian protested thoughtfully. "I may have achieved some personal popularity, but much more, it is humiliating to confess, is due to grandfather's position in the world and the capitalized force it represents. I doubt if even money, however, could have secured me the recognition which Mrs. Rensselaer has won for me. The Rensselaer name is a powerful one socially."

"It is just that about which I was going to speak to you," said Herbert with an awkward bluntness surprising in one of his breeding, until one remembered his early cowboy experiences with Kelvin. "I am prepared to offer you the Rensselaer name for your own."

Lillian looked up at him and smiled.

"The dream of your respected aunt," she laughed. "Herbert, you're a nice boy, but I'm not in love with you. Are you with me?"

He considered that matter thoughtfully for a little time.

"Well, no," he confessed with infinite relief.

"I thought not," she returned, still laughing. "It is a pity to disappoint your aunty, but let's do that very thing. You're too good a friend of mine to spoil."

“I’m beginning to like you immensely,” confessed Herbert. “Let’s shake hands on it;” which they cordially did, and the Secretary of War gave up, quite easily, certain daring ambitions of his own which he had founded upon his aunt’s urgings, and the consideration of Lillian Breed’s millions.

At almost the same moment Sumner Rollins had made a quite different proposal, one with the whole heart and the whole love and the whole honor of a stalwart man, and Elsie White, with sorrow that it must be so, searched in her heart and found for him only friendship, friendship, it is true, grown strangely dear to her, but still only friendship; and the man whose image blocked the way of Rollins was thinking of her even then, to the entire forgetfulness of Lillian Breed.

CHAPTER XXVI

LILLIAN ARRANGES A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR PHILLIP IN HER OWN BOUDOIR

IN a hundred cities there was riot and discord. In a thousand villages there was grave panic. In a million homes there was hunger. The persistent detention of cash from circulation, the interference with the logical evolution of business, the sudden upheaval of all the social and economic conditions which had been developing for the past two centuries, had thrown the country into a turmoil. Commerce was paralyzed and, three months after Senator Sawyer had threatened a revolt, the entire United States was in a state bordering on anarchy. In the cities, particularly, there was a most dangerous condition. The time for public mass-meetings had gone by. Processions of the unemployed had been clubbed into disruption. Street-corner speakers, among whom Ben White had become prominent for a certain rudely effective oratory, were suppressed. Gatherings in halls were censored by the police, the militia, or the rapidly increasing army of regular soldiers, and were

broken up, sometimes with bloodshed, at the least sign of inflammatory speech. The consequence was natural. Secret meetings were held everywhere, and the emissaries of Blagg gained converts by the tens and the hundreds of thousands from coast to coast. The chaos that Kelvin had deliberately inaugurated to serve his own ends was serving the ends of Blagg equally well. Where men, welcomed for their physical superiority, were driven by the need of employment to the now staggering pay-roll of the regular army, others were driven to the desperate oaths of Blagg's organization. They could not be held patient — the werwolves of all this vast secret society — and here and there, especially in congested districts, scenes of the utmost violence were enacted. The throwing of bombs, with terrific consequence to public safety, became common, so common, indeed, that the life of no public man was secure; yet Kelvin, attended by his usual guard, went everywhere. He seemed to bear a charmed life, and on the very day he declared martial law throughout the Union, when every newspaper was against him and when countless hordes were clamoring for his death, he went calmly to Forest Lakes to keep an appointment with Henry Breed, who, by the doctor's command, was compelled to remain at home. Five hundred grim, armed men, indifferent to the turmoil of the world outside, now

guarded the grounds, and Kelvin spoke of them the moment he met Breed.

"I want your men," said he. "I have examined the faces of them. They are mountaineers every one, and men of blind allegiance. I need them in Washington."

"No," protested Breed. "I have been years in selecting them, and they must stay here to guard Forest Lakes and me, and what you know to be in the vault below."

"The vault needs no guarding," replied Kelvin. "We'll remove its contents very shortly to the government treasury, anyhow. The time is ripe, and my plan is to be carried out at once."

"Our plan, you mean," corrected Breed, smiling, whereat Kelvin's eyes contracted for a second.

It was significant of the remarkable control that Kelvin had obtained over this man, whose once indomitable will had bent the commerce of a nation to his own ends, that he protested no further against the appropriation of his picked guards. Instead, he turned eagerly to the immense portfolio which Sam brought in. Spreading this upon the library table, Kelvin opened it, disclosing a thick stack of the large diagrams so characteristic of him.

"I have had a small army of statisticians, under the charge of your invaluable Jens, upon these for the last three months," observed Phillip, "and at

last I have them in very comprehensive shape. There are a few matters, however, upon which I want the benefit of your experience."

Breed, restored at once to his shrewd old calculating self, leafed carefully over the neat cardboard diagrams which gave, in turn, comprehensive surveys of the entire extent, condition, and prospects of textile manufacturers, of the steel industry, of meat packing, of merchandising, of every branch of human industry and commerce, each with all its ramifications. From the experience of his nearly fourscore years Breed made crisp, brief, and pregnant comment upon each industry, upon which occupation Doctor Zelphan beamed through his thick spectacles with approval, for Breed was never so normal as at these conferences, when the habit of his business perspicacity came upon him. Far into the night they sat over this work, with Zelphan and Rensselaer and, for a time, Lillian as interested lookers-on, and when it came time for Phillip to retire he was very weary. Leaving the others still in conversation, he was about to make his way to his own apartments, but Lucy met him at the head of the stairs.

"They have been making some repairs up that way, Mr. Kelvin," she informed him, "and we'll have to change your rooms for this visit."

She led him back into the other wing of the

house, and he frowned as he noted that the room into which he was shown adjoined the suite Lillian occupied. Inside the room he examined the communicating door. There was no key in it, but, stooping down to inspect the bolt, he could see that it was locked, and with a nod of satisfaction he made haste to get to rest. He had scarcely begun to undress, however, when the communicating door opened, and Lillian, clad in the same kimono in which she had before entered his private apartments at the Esplanade in New York, came in, laughing as if her act were but a childish prank.

"Have you no discretion whatever?" Kelvin demanded with some impatience.

"Not much," she answered gaily. "What is the use of it in a poky, humdrum place like this, where everybody is deaf, dumb, and blind? Come, I want to show you something."

"I'll look at it in the morning," returned Kelvin.

"In the morning won't do," she insisted. "It will be too late, then."

She insisted so strongly that Kelvin finally went with her into her own apartments. She went to her desk and brought a letter.

"See," she said, "I have found a note written by George Blagg to Ben White, the father of your precious friend Elsie, while he was still gardener. You know grandfather insisted on keeping him here

long after I discharged that enterprising young woman. There are some important state secrets in this letter. Blagg has been contracting for a million rifles, for one thing." As she spoke she seemed to be listening intently. Phillip reached out his hand for the missive. She thrust it quickly behind her back and looked up at him with bantering eyes. "Is that the way you express your thanks?" she playfully protested. "You sha'n't have it until you show yourself more grateful than that," and she pursed up her lips.

With something of reluctance Phillip bent forward to give her the stipulated kiss, and as he did so she suddenly threw her arms about his neck. Whatever remained in him of response to her wild attachment, in spite of all his resolution, sprang instantly to momentary life and, overcome by her wiles, though for the last time, he clasped her in a mad embrace, while the blood pounded at his temples and smarted his eyes and throbbed in his ears. At that instant the hall door opened wide at the hand of Lucy, and Henry Breed stalked in, followed by Doctor Zelphan and Herbert Rensselaer and his aunt. Phillip and Lillian instantly sprang apart, but it was too late. The tableau had been seen. The sudden visitors were hardly prepared for this revealment, for they were all shocked. Henry Breed was the first to find his voice.

"Lucy told us that Lillian wished to see us in her room, and led the way," he observed dryly; "but Lucy seems to have been mistaken."

"She was," asserted Lillian coolly; "but since you are here I may as well tell you a bit of news, grandfather. You may announce to-morrow that the long-standing secret engagement between Phillip and myself is to culminate in an immediate wedding. We were just discussing the date. I think about the first of next month will suit us best, won't it, Phillip?" and her hand sought his.

Phillip, half confused, half angry, put as good a face upon the matter as he could, and agreed with every appearance of suavity that the first was the ideal date. Having announced their intention, the surprised couple were able to look their captors in the face with more or less of cool defiance. In Herbert's eyes Kelvin saw grave remonstrance. Doctor Zelphan was openly chuckling. Henry Breed was smiling and rubbing his withered old palms together. Nothing could have suited him better than this end, even though through this means. The shocked and horrified Mrs. Rensselaer finally found her motive power, and sailing into the room took Lillian's arm under her own and marched away with her to her own apartments, casting looks of scorn and contempt upon the rude and uncouth gentlemen there present. Doctor Zel-

phan, after the ladies had gone, was the first to congratulate Phillip, shaking hands with him heartily.

“It is a wonderful match,” said he with sardonic glee; “an ideal match. I could not have picked out any two individuals more perfectly mated to produce the—the entirely typical offspring of future America.”

Henry Breed delightedly patted Kelvin on the shoulder and called him son, and it never seemed to cross his mind that there had been anything in the circumstances to incur his disapproval, if not his anger. Rensselaer lingered long enough to protest.

“I say, old man,” said he, “you might have been fair enough to give a fellow a correct tip when I asked you in the first place. You’ve let me make an ass of myself. I finally gave in to the aunt and proposed to Miss Breed not long ago. I—I wish you happiness.”

Kelvin looked enigmatically into Rensselaer’s eyes, abruptly laughed aloud, and then, wheeling, turned into his own room.

CHAPTER XXVII

KELVIN GAINS AN EMPIRE AND LOSES THE LOVE OF A GIRL

STALWART soldiers surrounded the White House grounds in lines two deep. From the gates to the main entrance the way was lined upon both sides with bronzed and weather-seamed, and, for the most part, gray-bearded nondescripts who stood slouchily in their olive-green khaki and who had nothing of the bearing of soldiers in their attitude. They were a strange lot, full five hundred of them, and yet any one disposed to laugh at the awkward line had only to look into the stern succession of mirthless eyes to know that here was dogged fighting blood; and ridicule which began at the feet and swept up to unkempt beards stopped abruptly at those eyes. Without, in the streets of Washington, faint echo of the conditions in other and more vitally disturbed cities, great throngs of the discontented gathered and shifted and circled and eddied, forming into groups that fell away at the approach of police or soldiery, only to form again into new groups; and the com-

posite sound of their muttering was a hoarse and heavy growl. They gathered near to the White House, but they kept at a respectful distance from the soldiery. Already, throughout the length and breadth of the land, there had been sufficient clashes to set citizen against soldier and soldier against citizen, and recruits that but the day before yesterday had spat at a uniform and yesterday had been driven by necessity into the employ of the army, to-day found themselves arrayed against their former comrades, and spat at the plain citizenry! Mutterings and grumblings were so universal as to blend into a guttural monotone; and yet, after all, there was more anxiety than anger in the voice of the public, and the great question was: What next?

What next! In what was it all to end? Within the White House there were throngs of those who deemed that they had a right to inquire, to argue, to protest, to denounce; for there were signs on every hand which might well turn the mind of any man to broader thoughts than self. The outer rooms forming the approach to Kelvin's private office were crowded, and in the one next to his visitors were so packed that egress, even for the president himself, would have been impossible. That door was kept locked. Two stalwart officers held it, and as Kelvin, sitting in calm pomp with

his two huge, gaudily liveried negroes behind him, enigmatically disposed of one agitated patriot after another, the officers opened the door a little way and called a name and let in one struggling, perspiring man or his carefully counted delegation; and the shrill crowd in that outer room so bulged that it took the united strength of the two gigantic guards to close the door again. Heavy book-cases had been placed against the door opening into the hall, and the only other means of egress and ingress was by a private door leading to a small room which, in turn, opened toward the carriage entrance.

Just now, Kelvin was entertaining a delegation picked by himself. They were his cabinet officers, and they were pale and nervous to a man. Added to them were two strangely out-of-place groups, the one consisting of Henry and Lillian Breed, Jens Nelson, and Doctor Zelphan, and the other of Rollins and Elsie White. All of these had been admitted by the private door. The arrival of the latter two groups was disconcerting to Phillip at the moment, although, after a slight period of cogitation, he had ordered them both admitted. Rollins and Elsie White came last, and the moment they had entered Phillip ordered the door to be re-locked. He had been upon the point of making an important announcement to his waiting and apparently prepared cabinet, and now, his small au-

dience once more quiet, he raised his hand impressively; but before he could speak Elsie White hurried forward to him.

“Look in your desk, quickly, but carefully!” she cried. “An infernal machine is concealed there, timed to explode at twelve!”

She was deathly pale. There were dark rings under her eyes. Evidently she had passed a sleepless night. Phillip, obeying his habit of mentally ignoring sudden and agitated thoughts that he might consider them in forced calmness, looked down upon her compassionately, and the moment for which Elsie had waited all these years had at last almost arrived; to-day she stood nearer to him in affection than any other living creature. There had come upon him a new gravity, as well there might, in view of the fates that might be impending, and he had suddenly felt a need that had never before appealed to him. It had begun to dawn upon him that Elsie was that need; Elsie, whose heart he knew had been faithful to him throughout all these years. Love had come to him at last. Well, there was still time. He had fought and he had won. The moment of his triumph was at hand, and with the fruits of that triumph he would crown Love. All this in a flash; then came the consideration of Elsie's news and a recourse to that theatricalism which, beginning with

a deliberate intention to be impressive, had grown into more or less of a habit with him. He glanced at the clock. It was then barely ten. Jens Nelson had started hastily toward the door, but now he returned to the side of Doctor Zelphan.

"According to that we have plenty of time," Phillip said calmly.

"Look!" Elsie frantically insisted. "The machine might be faulty. It was timed for twelve because it is known that you never leave until one, but there is danger this very second! Every act of your daily routine has been studied, and in a half dozen places these things lie in wait for you. Here is a list of them," and she gave him a paper. "Moreover, to-day at noon there will be flashed from one end of the country to the other, by telegraph and by wireless, George Blagg's command to begin fighting. He has an immense secret army ready, awaiting this word. Only a small proportion of the men are armed, but they intend to take their weapons from the soldiers. His entire forces are to rise at once and capture the states simultaneously, from coast to coast, by the suddenness of their attack."

Kelvin looked up from the paper she had given him.

"How do you know these things?" he demanded. What little color there had been in Elsie's face

left it suddenly. Even her lips were as white as paper. "I can not tell you," she murmured faintly.

Kelvin nodded his head. He surmised well through what source her information had come, though he did not know how she had secured it. This vast conspiracy had Ben White as one of its weak arms.

"But hurry, Phillip! Hurry!" pleaded Elsie, using his familiar name unconsciously. "If you find there what I have told you, you may know that all the rest is true."

"It is probably true enough," replied Phillip calmly. "Herbert, I had wished you to be here when I made my announcement, but you know what it is, as do the others of my cabinet, and what your share in it is to be. I shall excuse you for the time being. Wire at once to every military force under your command to be in readiness for this uprising."

One of the attendants opened the private door and let Herbert out. Kelvin stooped and opened every drawer of his desk on either side, but found nothing. He turned to Elsie with a slight smile, but she was on her knees now in front of the desk, with her ear applied to it.

"Search further," she insisted. "I hear something ticking."

Again Kelvin looked through the drawers and found nothing unusual.

"Pull out the bottom one on this side, and look underneath it," she directed, with now almost frantic insistence.

Kelvin did so. Under the right-hand bottom drawer, in the six inches of enclosed space left between it and the floor, he found a wooden box, four inches high, a foot wide, and two feet long. This he pulled out carefully and set upon his desk. Applying his ear to it he detected a faint ticking. It was locked in three places in front and in two places on the rear between the hinges. He handed it to one of the negroes.

"Have this removed to some safe place at once," he ordered.

"'Deed no! Not me!" protested the quaking voice of Peavy as he very, very gently slid the box back on the desk and then sprang away from it. "Ah's suttainly boun' an' 'terminated to be planted in mah grave whole, Ah is!"

Sam, though a curious ashen gray with fear, picked up the box, but one of the big officers, a white man, took it quietly from his hands, and went out the door with it.

Kelvin glanced after him mechanically and turned slowly to his cabinet. "Gentlemen," he began, "the United States is in a condition of absolute anarchy."

"Wait a minute," suddenly quavered the shrill

voice of Henry Breed. "Wait a half hour, Phillip. I wouldn't believe Jens, and I didn't bring that robe along."

Jens looked at him with a curious smile. Breed had not been invited to this gathering. Jens had brought him perforce.

Phillip held up his hand for silence. "The country is in a state of absolute anarchy," he repeated. "It has been working to that end for a quarter of a century, more and more rapidly each year. Recent developments have hastened the crisis. It is necessary that a radical change in our entire social system be inaugurated at once to save us from riot, bloodshed and starvation." His eyes sought a type-written sheet lying on the desk before him. "Now, therefore, I, the chief executive of the nation, issue the following proclamation: That all public utilities and private enterprises are hereby confiscated by the government for the benefit of the government and the people; that all present owners and managers of these enterprises shall remain in their present employments and conduct these enterprises for the government; that all factories, mills, stores, and establishments of commerce of whatsoever nature which have ceased operation be immediately reopened, and all seekers of employment be given work to the full capacity of these plants. The government will insure the payment of

wages, will become responsible for all liabilities, and become the holder of all assets. All holdings of cash and of stocks, bonds or other securities, except those reposing in banks, hereby become the property of the government. All banks, whether national or private, are hereby appointed and taken over as branches of the governmental treasury, and no money shall be paid out without official order. All factories, mills, and enterprises of whatsoever nature, having started work at once, shall issue, until further adjustment, time-checks at the previous rates of employment, which time-checks shall be taken in payment by all merchandise concerns, the same as legal tender, until the government shall have time for adjustment. Every able-bodied man in the United States between the ages of twenty and sixty is hereby ordered to return to his previous employment, or, if previously without employment, to apply at the nearest center of industry. Any able-bodied person, as described, found idle within one week after this proclamation, without valid excuse, shall be arrested and imprisoned. Any citizen found armed within twenty-four hours after this proclamation shall be shot for treason without trial.

“To all the foregoing I have hereunto set my hand and seal.

“PHILLIP KELVIN — EMPEROR.”

A sigh of relief and immeasurably more burst from the lips of his cabinet officers, men whom he had gathered around him for just this purpose, and who knew his full intention. The die was cast, the tide was in motion, either to its ebb or its flow. They were to be the vast gainers or the incalculable losers; either grand dukes, or outcasts fleeing for their lives.

A sharp wail, as of an animal in sudden torture, burst from the lips of Henry Breed. He started forward, shaking and trembling, the veins on his leathern old face starting out like whipcords. He raised both his clenched fists and opened his mouth to speak, but no words came.

Speech was supplied on the instant, however, by Sumner Rollins. "By God, no!" he cried. "I knew that you contemplated some folly, Kelvin, but never that you had in your crazed mind a crime so great as this, or I should either have impeached you as a traitor or had you imprisoned as a lunatic. Hear me, you men! Let no word of this proclamation get beyond this room as you value your lives!"

"Arrest that man!" shouted Kelvin.

"Arrest me if you dare!" cried Rollins. "I am going from this room a free man, and I will show you that patriotism and the love of liberty in the United States are neither dead nor asleep. In every village and upon every farm there still

dwells the immortal spirit of our forefathers, who fought and died to make the constitution a living, breathing thing; who fought and died to gain liberty, absolute and unimpeachable, for every human being who set foot upon this soil; who fought and died to defend that liberty, and the union which insures it, against foreign invaders and against internal dissension. Kelvin, I am going out of here to face you with an army which can defeat any politically made army in the world; an army fighting for the sacred and undefeatable causes of home and country and freedom. I shall issue such a call that every unvitiated descendant of every true American will answer; a call so loud and so deep and so potent that even those old heroes of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, of Bull Run and Shiloh and Gettysburg, will rise from their very graves and swing into line to sweep this colossal folly back into the fourteenth century where it belongs, and to make a byword and a laughing-stock of the name of Phillip Kelvin — *Emperor!* ”

The guards who had advanced toward Rollins had hesitated upon his outburst, and in that moment of his righteous fury, standing stern and stalwart with his eyes flashing, he was commanding enough to have halted any underling. Now, however, the guards looked to Kelvin, and he struck his knuckles impatiently upon the table. Elsie

White, upon Kelvin's plunge into his proclamation, had stepped back to the door, where she now stood directly back of Rollins. As the latter spoke she had put her hands behind her and quietly turned the key. Now she plucked Rollins by the sleeve.

"Hurry! Go!" she whispered.

She pulled open the door and thrust Rollins through it before he had more than half comprehended her intention, then she slammed it shut, turned the key in the lock, and slipped the key into the neck of her gown, just as the guards and Sam threw themselves upon the door.

"Miss White, I will give you thirty seconds in which to produce that key," came the cold voice of Kelvin.

She looked back at him steadily, but made no move. Kelvin drew his watch from his pocket. A tense silence settled in the room. The thirty seconds as they ticked themselves off upon Kelvin's watch seemed an eternity. Finally he slipped his timepiece back into his pocket.

"Will you give it up?" he demanded. Now his voice was trembling.

She shook her head.

"Sam, take it."

The blood that had left Elsie's face suddenly surged up crimson as Sam approached her, but, ex-

cept to clasp her hands over her breast she did not move, nor did she take her eyes from Kelvin. He himself turned half nauseated. He had made the threat of Sam, hoping that her horror of the negro would produce the effect he sought, but since it had not, the word of an emperor was out. She shuddered as Sam put his enormous hands upon her, but she defended the key, as best she could with her puny strength. There was a brief struggle in which the waist of her gown was torn almost its full length, baring her snow-white bosom; and then, with a grin upon his ugly face and a blaze in his eyes that was not good to see, Sam plunged his enormous black hand after the key. The appalled watchers were startled by a shrill laugh of derision from Lillian Breed. Sam sprang from Elsie at once and inserted the key in the lock, though Rollins, by that time, was in his automobile and speeding away toward the Maryland line and concealment, unpursued.

Elsie staggered back a pace against the wall for support, still with those large eyes fixed upon Kelvin. Across the width of the room he gazed into them and saw die there every last lingering trace, from every corner of her heart, of the love and affection that had for many years been a part of its fiber, and the wrenching out of that affection was more than her frail strength could bear. She sank

fainting to the floor. Two or three ran to revive her, but Lillian was not among them.

In the midst of that confusion Henry Breed found his voice. "You sha'n't have it!" he cried. "You sha'n't have my money. I'll resist to the last ditch. You can't get into the vault. I'll hire a million assassins to kill you. *I! I was to be emperor! I was to be emperor!*" The old man's hands were twitching convulsively at his bald head as if he would snatch out the hair that was not there. His face was scarlet, and there were flecks of foam upon his lips.

His granddaughter put her hand upon his shoulder. "Never mind, grandfather," she said contemptuously; "remember that it's all in the family."

She glided up to the desk before Phillip. "My Emperor, I salute you," she said, smiling up at him, and from his desk she picked up the dagger. "Uncrowned and unrobed as yet, still I salute you, for you are sceptered, at least. Here it is, your talisman that twice threatened your life. Do you remember how once, holding its point up like this, you declared that in this sign you would conquer? It represented then, as it does now, the tips of ten thousand glittering sword-points, of a million glittering bayonets. I believed in you then, as I do now, and declared that I, too, would reign. In this

sign *we* conquer!" and with an hysterical laugh she raised the dagger aloft.

Kelvin looked down upon her in sudden fury. He had not forgiven her for enticing him to the forgetfulness of his great principle, that to acquire success he must have no entanglements with women; he had not forgiven her his entrapment into a marriage avowal; he had not forgiven her the death of that love which he had seen die out of Elsie White's eyes; he had not forgiven her that heartless laugh; he could not forgive her this bold and hasty claim before his scarcely established court.

"For some time to come," said he with quiet suppression, "I expect to reign alone."

She looked up at him and read in his eyes the cool first use he meant to make of his absolutism, which was to repudiate her. She read it there, implacable and irrevocable. "Then, your Majesty," she said to him mockingly, "I have only to ask you that you guarantee me safe exit from the palace."

His face flushed at this first trace of ridicule to be heaped upon his pretensions to royalty, but his voice was grave and even enough as he strove to establish dignity. "You have my word for that," said he.

"Then," she cried as she sprang back from his desk toward the door that was still open, "I shall

keep this little souvenir until I have a chance to present it to you again," and she thrust the dagger into her belt. "Do you know what I am going to do? I am about to turn revolutionist; I am about to become the Jeanne d'Arc of America; I am about to join George Blagg's army and finance it and lead it!" And with a shrill laugh she swept out of the door.

There was a moment of paralyzed silence, and then through the corridor they heard her voice, loud and clear and wild, singing *The Marseillaise*. She swept out through the entrance and down between the ranks of those bronzed mountaineer soldiers. Marching with martial tread, she sang the Song of Blood clear through their ranks; and the people in the streets caught up that exalting chorus, spreading it with incredible swiftness to the confines of the city. The news of its singing flashed along wires and across pulsating, electrified spaces. In every city in the United States that mighty, rousing song was caught up, and the land vibrated with one accord to its rhythm and grew wild with its frenzy. In one day America, that had in its infancy disdained the rule of royalty, that had sworn in every atom of its heart and in every fiber of its body and in every drop of its blood that no monarch should ever sit in authority upon one foot of its soil, had an emperor — and its national song had become *The Marseillaise!*

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHEREIN BELLS RING AND WHISTLES BLOW AND
EMPEROR KELVIN STARTS ON A JOURNEY

AT midnight, Phillip the First sat in the observation tower he had caused to be built upon the roof of the White House, watching, waiting. He remained so perfectly motionless and for so long a time, in the moonlight which swept into the dimness of the small, square room, that one might have thought him asleep, except for the glistening of the high light upon his eyes, which were upturned fixedly to one bright star that hung above the dome of the capitol. Even the sudden harsh clatter of a bell within the apartment did not disturb him from his statue-like rigidity. From a bench at the rear, however, a tall, broad-shouldered figure, which might have been a gigantic shadow from the even blackness of the clothes and the face and hands, rose and picked up the telephone from a little table in the corner. The shadowy figure turned to Kelvin quietly.

“It’s General Rensselaer, suh,” he said. “He wants to see yo’ all on very ’pawtant business.”

"Tell them to let him come up," directed Kelvin without turning his head.

There seemed a subtle fascination in that star for him. It was the one which, in smiling jest, he had once named as his "star of destiny," and though his reason denied him any superstition, still his fancy grappled firmly upon it, and night after night, when the skies were clear, he gazed on that star and hung upon it all his strategies and all his planning dreams, planning of such scope as to be all but monstrous, day visions so vast that they verged upon absurdity, projects so illimitable as to be almost impious!

But why not? He had accomplished in succession all his spacious aims until now. From ocean to ocean, for seven days, there had existed a state of tense, taut strain. What violence, what carnage, what hideous saturnalia of bloodshed might break forth at any moment no one knew; but in the meantime he, Phillip Kelvin, who but a few brief years before had possessed not a dollar and scarce a friend, was still Emperor of America. Emperor! Phillip the First! What vast conquests might yet lie before him!

His preparations for handling this present situation were excellently laid. In or near every center of population were inassed well-drilled soldiers, able

to combat and to quell any insurrection. There might be a revolt more or less systematized, but it could do very little against the systematic resistance that Kelvin had devised. He had planned wisely for a reorganization of social conditions, that he knew. He had issued proclamations that, if carried out, would render this chaos into order, and that most briefly, he was sure. Then, the country once more reorganized upon a self sustaining basis, where every man had an equal chance for sustenance and moderate accumulation, the larger dreams might materialize, the real victories might begin.

The conquest and annexation of Canada and Mexico would come next, and co-extensive with this the building up of the largest navy in the world. Europe, that vast tissue of states bound by a flimsy figment called "the balance of power," could be disintegrated by a single shot; thrown into a turmoil of cross purposes that would render its individual masses easy prey. With each new victory would come more strength, and his imperial progress might sweep on and on until the entire world, from pole to pole and from Occident to Orient, might be bound together under his resistless sway; linked in a brotherhood of universal peace and prosperity and equality, with himself as the benign dictator! Oh, star of destiny, what say you to that? The star, a keen

silver point, beamed down but coldly upon him. There seemed to come a sudden chill in the air, and he shivered slightly.

Crisply up the steps came Herbert Rensselaer.

"How ghastly it is up here!" said he. "Why don't you have some light?"

"That is a peculiar question for the Commander in Chief of the Imperial army to ask," replied Kelvin with a smile.

Rensselaer himself smiled.

"It would make your whereabouts rather conspicuous," he admitted; "but under the circumstances it might be well to turn on the lights and leave them burning. We shall be away from here in a few minutes."

"Forest Lakes?" asked Kelvin with quick interest. "At last! We should have made that expedition a week ago."

"My organization was not perfect enough," Rensselaer objected. "But we are quite prepared now. At every half mile between here and Breed's, by the time we are moving, there will be stationed a detachment large enough for protection. Each detachment, as we come up to it, will close in and follow behind us. The main body is timed to arrive at the gate of Forest Lakes exactly at the time we do, and the following divisions will arrive at the time we are most likely to need reinforcements. I

wish that it were not necessary to take you there. You should be here where you can direct your campaign."

"I don't admire the trip myself," confessed Kelvin, "but outside of Henry Breed and his granddaughter, and possibly Doctor Zelphan, I am the only person in the world who knows the exact location and the combinations of his vault and its billion and a half of cash." He paused for a moment to contemplate in some inner shame, how and why and when Lillian had given him the secret of those combinations. "The greatest fear I have is that Breed may have changed the combination of his locks."

"I doubt if he was able to do so," returned Rensselaer. "He left here, upon the day of your proclamation, apparently in a state of almost complete paralysis, attended by Doctor Zelphan, my aunt, Jens Nelson and Elsie White."

Phillip was silent a moment.

"By Elsie White?" he repeated. "It is queer that she went along."

Herbert shrugged his shoulders.

"Breed always liked her, and when Lillian left with the threat to join George Blagg, Breed turned to Elsie like a child and insisted that she should not leave him."

Kelvin winced, and a great longing came over him. He too would have liked to have turned to

Elsie White "like a child," but he was for ever too late. His time for that was past. He shook off the feeling of momentary weakness that had come over him, but Rensselaer presently revived it. He, too, was looking out upon the silent city, and the same chill in the air that had seemed to affect Kelvin, came to him so that he drew his military cloak closer about him.

"Everything seems dead," he suddenly exclaimed. "It is getting on my nerves, this thing of waiting and waiting. Seven days ago, at exactly twelve o'clock, noon, George Blagg's army of a million was suddenly to pour out of the ground, from New York to San Francisco and from Duluth to New Orleans, a wild, ferocious horde, that, frothing at the mouth, was to sweep all law and all order before it, to grind it into dust, and to leave it but a red memory. We were prepared at that hour. Every regiment of our army stood at arms and ready. For a hundred and eighty hours the army and you and I have been waiting, waiting, waiting, all at that high tension, and nothing has happened. Nothing!"

He had scarcely finished speaking when a bell in some steeple near them tolled out a long, strident note; then another; then it began a rapid clanging! A distant factory whistle joined it. Both men sprang to their feet, their hands gripping the

window-sill, and leaned far out. Another bell, of a sharper tone, and one of a deeper, took up the clamor. Another whistle, two, a dozen, broke in with their deafening noise. It seemed that of a sudden every bell and every whistle in the city had been given frantic life. From the streets there arose, first, separate, individual shouts, then scattered cheers, then, as they of the under kennel awoke and rushed upon the pavement, a perfect babble of shrill cries. There was something terrific in those voices of the streets. There was in them a note of savage triumph, of lust let free, of all the hatred possible to the human breast, intensified by demoniac fury long pent up, multiplied a hundred thousand fold by numbers. Into the pandemonium of sounds there was suddenly injected a new and more sinister one: the sharp crack of rifles and then measured volley after volley! Shrieks and groans and shrill screams of anguish arose into the midnight air, and battened about the little observatory tower with startling distinctness; and in each human cry, whether of anger or agony, there was a damning accusation of Kelvin, though one that fell on deaf ears so far as pity or remorse was concerned. Kelvin's philanthropy was a cold and an ethical one, and in it there was no capacity for human sympathy with suffering.

"Well," said he with a sigh; "it has come."

Rensselaer's eyes were glistening.

"I regret to leave it, even for a day," he declared. "This is the moment I have longed for all my life; but Pellman will be able to manage things here. I could not be everywhere, and I have good generals at every station, I know. Think Kelvin, what this means! If Blagg's threats are right, and this seems to prove them, at this identical moment this same hell has broken loose in every city in the United States."

The telephone bell behind them rang sharply. Sam was already on his feet, standing poised, a great human beast, all the savagery in him strangely stirring. He sprang to answer the telephone.

"All right, suh," said he, and turned to Kelvin. "Everything is ready. They ah waiting foh you."

"Tell them we will be right down," directed Kelvin.

As they turned to go a roseate glow mounted the sky behind the dome of the capitol. They paused a moment and watched it turn to carmine.

"Fire!" announced Kelvin grimly. "I had counted this as a part of the cost, but I hope the destruction may not be great."

Their eyes rested on a strange scene when they came down to the other door. From the portecochère to the carriage gate were solid lines of soldiers upon each side, four deep. Outside in

the street, the entire block was thronged with men in khaki standing about a hollow square of fourteen automobiles, while at the ends of the block, upon the cross streets, there surged masses of people, frantic and howling, not yet formed into the terrible unity of purpose that was to come. Kelvin stepped into a closed automobile with Rensselaer and Sam and two of his most dependable guards, and with Peavy, ashen gray and protesting, up by the chauffeur. Kelvin had no sooner stepped in than Peavy jumped from his place and ran back under the porte-cochère.

"Indeed Ah cain' go, Mistah Kelvin," Peavy declared, listening with terror to the vengeful voice of the mob. "Ah ain' well."

Sam immediately jumped out after him.

"Git back in yo' place!" he commanded.

"Now yo' all go 'way from me, Sam!" cried Peavy. "Ah ain' got no time to projec' roun' wid yo'! Ah ain' well, Ah tells you!"

"Sit back on yo' place!" repeated Sam.

"I suah cain' do it," protested Peavy. "Mah God, man, Ah ain' well, Ah tells yo'! Ah'm scaihed sick!"

The sharp voice of Kelvin came from the automobile.

"Leave him there, Sam. We don't want him. He will be worse than useless to us."

“All right, suh, Ah’ll leave him heah, then. Jes’ one minute.”

There was the wail as of a lost soul from Peavy, as Sam suddenly sprang upon him, and, gripping his powerful fingers around Peavy’s neck, bore him to the floor. He knelt over him for just a moment while Peavy’s legs struggled convulsively. Then he gave a sudden jerking pressure of all his weight to those gigantic hands, arose and jumped up by the chauffeur; and Peavy lay still where Sam had left him.

Kelvin uttered no word of protest to Sam, but he turned to Herbert with a return of that chill feeling which had twice before oppressed him this night.

“A bad omen,” he said.

Herbert laughed lightly.

“There will be a thousand bad omens before we are through with this,” he predicted; “but I think that even Peavy would have been safe in this flying wedge of ours.”

The automobile rolled out into the street and took its place in the center of the hollow square. Both before and behind it were six automobiles, three abreast, and one was upon each side. Each of these was a seven passenger car, and in the tonneau of each rested, upon a tripod, its sweep above the head of the chauffeur, a cylinder of shining brass; behind each cylinder stood a stalwart soldier in

khaki, and two others sat upon the seat ; each soldier was further accoutered with rifles and small arms, and thus, surrounded by fourteen Gattling guns and spare men to man them, the fifteenth automobile, which contained Kelvin, took command of the expedition. There was a shrill whistle from Rensselaer, the soldiers fell away from before the machines like chaff, and the strange battery sprang forward.

Upon the cross street at the end of the block the people quickly gave way, but out from an intersecting avenue two blocks beyond, a fanatical mob, shouting and cursing, turned and bore straight toward them. Guns could be seen on shoulders, and torches, already the sign and signal of lawlessness, as they had been in a thousand uprisings since the centuries began, were flaunted. From the forward automobile there came a sharp crackling, a succession of staccato snaps like the ripping of shingles from a roof. The running mob stopped, it fell back, it scattered like chaff, and in an instant more the autos, keeping evenly abreast, bumped and jerked over a pavement strewn with sickeningly soft impediments. Wherever a throng in the distance seemed about to bar the way, one of the Gattlings snapped out a rolling word of warning. A few went down, but when the automobiles reached the spot there was not a soul to offer them hindrance nor to reach with an accidental shot the sacred body

of the Emperor. So, through the city and out into the country they swept, to roads where they could go but two abreast and sometimes but single file; but always Kelvin was in the center, and never was there any interference. A half mile northeast of the city the headlights flared on a detachment in unmistakable khaki on both sides of the road, and these saluted as the imperial escort swept by, and cheered, and closing in behind marched at double quick.

CHAPTER XXIX

LILLIAM BREED IS IN HER NATURAL ELEMENT
AT LAST.

IN a thousand gory spots the beasts of hate were loosed at once, and the places in which they chose to glut their rage were the cities; the cities, where vice had congested, where crime had sought and found its fellows, where poverty had festered, where a deadly miasmatic blight had settled upon all life, all thought, all social intercourse. The ringing of that first deep-toned knell in Washington had been simultaneous with the clang of the same grim death watch from east to west and from north to south. George Blagg's own hand had pressed the wireless key which had sent the message flashing in every direction across startled space. Eager fanatics had received it, and wherever it was transmitted there came almost the instantaneous pealing of bells from church and fire and school towers, and the answering shriek of factory whistles; then the voices of the frantic horde and the volleys of guns and the shrieks of the wounded and the reddening of night skies. In every city large

enough to have fostered these unnatural districts, out from tenements where the sustenance of life was a matter of crusts and luxury was spelled by a pail of beer, swarmed an ill-clad, unkempt, underfed horde to avenge the follies of society upon itself. The horror of it was that they did not attack the soldiery direct, as Blagg had planned, but the better nourished citizens; for Blagg's original secret organization, bound together with some idea of order, with some sense of philanthropic motive, with some plan of warfare against the "Imperial Army," was now augmented by a wild, disordered herd of the criminally inclined, who, seeing that law and order were swept away, turned to mad license.

Out into the residence districts they swept in packs, like starving wolves, their faces contorted to devilish caricatures of the Supreme Likeness, and sickening scenes of horror ensued. Wherever a proud home reared itself, a monument to the industry or the wit or the greed of some man, there were murder and pillage and rapine, all ending in the torch; and when the mob swept on it left behind it but a leaping blaze to light its way. The authorities were worse than powerless. As fast 'as a fresh center of disturbance was reported and a detachment sent there to quell it, the horror broke out anew in some other, distant field; and with sickening regularity, police or soldiers arrived only

in time to find the mob dispersed to regather at some other gluttonous feast, and a hopeless fire in progress. An all seeing eye, sweeping that night across the North American continent, would have found the land reddened by these many pyres, which lighted a redness still more terrible, for not only men and women were put to death in this maniacal orgie of reprisal, but little children were slaughtered as they ran shrieking from warm beds, and with oaths tossed into the fire by blackened faced monsters after the work of destruction had been completed. No night in all the history of the world had paralleled this; no blood lust was ever so hideously satiated; no carnage was ever so widespread, for this one smeared a continent with blood.

While this raving debauchery took place over the length of the land, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Lakes to the Gulf, three separate concourses crept, under cover of the night, one from the north and one from the south and one from the east, convergent upon Forest Lakes, where the prize coveted of each army, Breed's billion and a half dollars in solid cash, lay hidden beneath the library cellar. The first of these concourses, the one from the north, had crept silently forward all night long. Many of its members had marched now for five successive nights, sleeping in the barns of friendly farmers by day, and arising the next night with one

or more recruits. They had avoided the villages, taking the least detours around them that they might; but ahead of them, to each village, they had sent one of their number, and when he rejoined them on the other side there marched behind him a goodly company. These bore no trace of uniform, but each man carried over his shoulder his rifle or his shot-gun. Some had belts for ammunition and others carried their pockets full. They were grim, stern men, sane human beings of the country districts, who had not been caught in the maelstrom of the social upheaval, men who had happily dwelt out of its fevered circles, men whose eyes and whose minds were clear to see the right and the wrong of things, and to know the great Justice that broods over all. They came on steadily and firmly, and their ranks constantly grew. As each detachment joined them a stern voice called: "Halt! Who comes?" and then into a listening ear was whispered by each new adherent of the ranks, "Liberty and the Republic!"

Nearer, upon the road from the east, a far different army, like a giant, nervous snake, came jerking along the dark road at much greater speed. It was composed of undersized men, for the most part, ranging from bloated-faced and blear-eyed youths to bloated-faced and blear-eyed middle

age, and there were bedraggled women, far more fiendish of visage than the men. They danced, many of them, as they marched, and always they sang; sang the blood-maddening song of *The Marseillaise*, sang it in cracked and jangling tones, with throats that were hoarse from shrieking and voices that were husky from dissipation; and never, even in the days when the tricolor received its baptism of blood, was *The Marseillaise* a more terrible song than on this night. Many of the singers carried torches, made from whatever inflammable substances they could find upon the way, and replenished as often as burned out. They made no detours, but swept past farm-houses and through villages in brazen insolence, and their passing was like a scourge, especially in the villages, where they broke open bakeries and meat shops, groceries and saloons, gorging themselves with what they wanted and wasting what they did not, offsetting expostulation with blows and resistance with murder, and passing on with ribald uproar that could have been equaled only by the din of the damned. Men in their beds heard and paled, and women and children whimpered in fear; and woe betide any who came in their path; for by and by they maimed and killed in mere wanton sport. They were drunk with the carnage that was to come, drunk with the license that was

to be theirs, drunk with the loosing of all their most evil passions; and they that rode at their head were drunker than any of them.

In a carriage drawn by two gray horses taken by force from a bewildered farmer, there rode tall, gaunt George Blagg, and by his side sat Lillian Breed, her gown, once a rich creation of red silk, soiled and tattered, the jaunty hat she had once worn replaced by a gay colored silk kerchief that she had knotted about her black hair; under her eyes were dark rings, but the eyes themselves gleamed with an excitement that was demoniacal, and her cheeks were aflame with an unnatural fire. Beautiful even in her dishevelment, she was the incarnation of the riotous spirit that had maddened all their following, and she it was, who, when any period of silence fell for a moment upon the twisting serpent of humanity behind her, raised her voice in the wild song of *The Marseillaise*. Each time, as that hymn of destruction was caught up by those directly about her and swept back along the trailing concourse to its unseen wake, she would laugh aloud in hysterical glee, and, sinking once more beside her consort, would clasp him in a wild embrace and shower mad kisses upon him, kisses which he returned with her own tigerish gusto; and those that danced ahead of the carriage and around it set up shouts of approval.

Nearer still, upon the road from the south, but waiting, there bivouacked a grim company in khaki, men who rested upon a hillside with their guns close by them in orderly formation, ready on the word to spring to their feet at attention. In the road, silent sentries patrolled. Farther back, a half mile, a smaller detachment bivouacked; at a half mile farther, still another, and so clear to Washington. These, too, were men of the city type, but they were the more stalwart ones, the ones who had best survived bad air and ill nourishment and ill condition. They were the sturdier-class of the unemployed workmen.

And so these three sorts of humanity centered toward Forest Lakes; the virile workmen of the cities; the rat-like undermen; the grim and stern stalwarts of the farms and villages — they in whom still lived the spirit of the constitution, of the revolution, of the union!

CHAPTER XXX

DOCTOR ZELPHAN DECIDES TO DIE CROUCHING AND
ROLLINS TAKES A KISS IN THE DARK

THROUGH the dark woods at Forest Lakes there came hurrying, from the northern boundary of the estate, an active figure which, avoiding the center of the drives where the starlight might reveal him, kept in the shadows of the trees; yet, when it became necessary to traverse open spaces, he crossed them boldly, making his way steadily toward the big gray stone house. Occasionally, in the denser shadows, he stopped to listen. On the clear night air his quick ears seemed to catch a sound like a distant murmur of human voices, and yet, when he paused, either the vagaries of the wind swept that distant sound away, or his strained imagination had deceived him.

He had wondered somewhat that no guard had stopped him. He knew that Kelvin, before he had proclaimed himself Emperor, had taken away with him Breed's five hundred picked mountaineers, but he knew also that a dozen or so of them had been left, flint-like men who would much rather

shoot first and inquire afterward in these troubled times. He was congratulating himself upon his good fortune in escaping these men, when, as he rounded the corner of the house, two of them, at the front door in the shadow of the porch, stepped forward with leveled guns.

"Throw up your hands! Come in the light!" commanded the one nearest him, and flashed the glow of an electric pocket lantern in his direction.

The new-comer did as he was bidden and walked directly toward the bull's-eye.

"Stop!" ordered the spokesman. He held the glow steadily upon the new-comer's face. "Looks a little like the description," said he to the other guard.

"Uh-huh," drawled the other reluctantly.

"Are you Sumner Rollins?" asked the spokesman.

"Yes," replied Rollins relieved, and began to lower his hands.

"Hold up your hands! Wait a minute!"

Rollins instantly raised his hands again, feeling rather ridiculous, while the guard stepped to the door and rang the bell. He had no more than rung it when the door opened, and Elsie White stood revealed in the flood of light.

"Come in, Mr. Rollins," she cheerily invited. "I have been waiting for you these three nights."

"Waiting for me!" he exclaimed, as he strode up and took both her hands in his own. "I don't see how that could be. I have been trying for a week to get word to you, but could find no way. I knew that with the telegraph control in the hands of Blagg no message was safe. How did you find out that I was coming?"

"I don't know," replied Elsie, dropping her eyes as she gently disengaged her hands and closed the door. "I just seemed to know it. I felt so sure of it that I gave all the outside men orders to watch for you. You see," and now she looked up at him frankly, "I knew that you were aware of our danger."

The light of joy leaped into his eyes. Once more he caught at her hands, and she blushed as she drew them behind her.

"They are waiting for you," she said. "I think that the danger is growing very near. There are armed soldiers just about a mile south of the gate."

"I thought I heard a murmur of voices as I came through the woods from the north," said Rollins, puzzled again, "but the sound seemed to come from the east, and it seemed to me, too, that an orderly night march of disciplined men would not betray itself in that way."

Elsie had opened the door of the library, and the tableau that met Rollins' gaze was so startling that

he stopped transfixed. Behind the long library table at the far end of the room, in a high-backed chair sat old Henry Breed, the richly jeweled crown upon his jerkily nodding head, the robe of ermine and carmine upon his emaciated form, the diamond tipped scepter in his hand. At one end of the table sat Jens Nelson, looking particularly boyish with his straw-colored hair and his straw-colored eyebrows and his round pink face, and at the other end Doctor Zelphan, peering through his thick spectacles at Rollins and grinning through his bushy red beard, while Mrs. Rensselaer, as composed as if at the reception of a social rival, sat aloof in a corner, thinking her own thoughts.

"Welcome to our court!" cackled Breed. "Welcome to our court! What plenipotentiary have we here?" and his head nodded so violently that the heavy crown jerked off and fell upon the table.

Doctor Zelphan calmly caught it as it was about to roll to the floor, carefully pushed out a dent that had been made in the soft gold, and restored the crown to Breed, who, after many bobbing attempts, placed it again upon his head.

"I shall examine the envoy's credentials and present him to your majesty in due time and form," sonorously announced Zelphan, with an evident enjoyment of the mockery that Rollins, in his shocked abhorrence, could not understand.

"Quite right," agreed Breed. "Quite right. Let all things be done in due form," and, apparently resolved not to interfere with proper observances, Breed drew his old, well-worn Bible to him, opened it, and, though his eyes were too dim to see the words, bent over the pages and began to mumble to himself garbled quotations, of which vengeance was the chief burden.

"I am the Prime Minister," Zelphan stated with burlesque gravity, arising and shaking hands with Rollins. "Our friend Jens, here, is the Lord High Chamberlain. Mrs. Rensselaer is the First Lady in Waiting. If you behave yourself, Rollins, we'll make you a Duke or an Earl or something. Pick out your title. Anything you please."

Rollins smiled thinly, but he could not take his eyes nor his mind from the appalling wreck of Henry Breed, the richest man the world had ever known, or perhaps ever would know, the man who, starting without a dollar, had, in the course of an ordinary lifetime, compassed half the wealth of a nation to his own use, and through that half controlled the balance of it. And he was come to this end!

Nelson roused Rollins to immediate business.

"What is the news?" he asked abruptly.

Rollins turned to him with relief.

"I have a force of more than fifteen hundred good, solid men who will be here inside of half an hour, to protect the vaults. I am quite sure that an attack will be made upon them to-night. I have been collecting my forces for a week against this moment, and watching Kelvin through the spy of whom you told me. When they got the Gattlings into the garage to-day, I knew the time was growing very short. We made a forced march to-night, making a straight cut to get here. Had we gone a trifle out of our road we could have had three more detachments with us, but we would have lost two or three hours. We might not have been here until daylight."

"They have Gattlings, you say?" asked Nelson, troubled.

"Fourteen of them, from the government arsenal, mounted in automobiles. If my men get here in time I want to ambush the expedition from behind the wall, and have my sharpshooters puncture their tires and pick off their gunners. If I can deploy half a mile of my squirrel hunters along the road, the automobiles can not go so fast but that we can stop every one of them, and disarm them. Kelvin is to be among them. If we can capture him the whole problem is solved."

"But they have Gattlings," protested Nelson.

"We have ambush and strategy," insisted Rollins confidently. "If only my forces can arrive in time!"

"You have done wonders," said Nelson admiringly. "How have you managed it? I thought we were helpless."

Rollins shrugged his shoulders.

"Kelvin had one enemy he could not throttle, and that was the American press, which, after all, is the staunch foundation upon which our liberty has been founded and upheld. Upon the instant of his proclamation Kelvin had a censor ready to take ostensible charge of every newspaper office in the United States. He might as well have put infants there. In some cases the censors were intimidated, in others they were hoodwinked, in others they were bound and gagged, and in some places killed. The papers, the majority of them, came out with precisely the things any good American would expect them to say under the circumstances. The soldiers were kept busy confiscating papers and closing up newspaper plants, but as fast as they closed one, the paper was issued from some other source, on borrowed presses and in borrowed offices. Several papers that ostensibly obeyed Kelvin's proclamation and issued censored journals thoroughly acceptable to him, were at the same time printing the incendiary organs of their rivals for them, and aiding in

their distribution. The eastern newspapers, on the very first day, issued my call to arms, and, though the telegraph was closed to us, within two days the appeal was being printed in Chicago and St. Louis, spreading farther west every day since the proclamation. In every village and every country settlement men are arming; the sort of men who always respond to the call of patriotism, the sort of men who know when their country and their homes are in danger, and who are willing to die to defend them. Nelson, you can't whip men like that! So long as they exist in this country it will be, without jingoism, but in glorious fact, the home of the brave and the land of the free!"

Zelphan, whose whole bearing until now had been like the flippancy of an overgrown, mischievous school-boy, smiled and nodded his head approvingly.

"It is the existence of such men as these followers of yours, and yourself, Rollins, that reconciles me to America," he admitted. "I have damned you as a whole more than once, as being a race of people who are plunging themselves into nerve bankruptcy; but after all, there is something in the fundamentals of this country different from any other nation; there is a healthiness in the body politic which, if nature be given a chance, can throw off all its cancers. America needs just some such eruption as this to clear her blood and let the healthy

molecules like you and Nelson here get to work. I'm very fond of Nelson since I have come to know him," and the doctor dropped a broad red hand upon Nelson's shoulder, whereat Nelson's face assumed a stony stare in which there was no apparent gleam of intelligence. "Nelson was fortunate enough to earn the scholarship grade entitling him to be supported by Breed through his college career, and in the end passed such examinations that he was given immediate employment in Mr. Breed's own service. By all this Nelson conceived himself bound in simple loyalty! Strange, isn't it?"

"I know," nodded Rollins with appreciation, and with a kindly glance at Jens. "Breed gave him to me for my secretary and he was a spy on all my acts."

"He was more than that," went on the doctor, laughing, and still regarding Nelson with a curious smile. "He was passed on to Kelvin when Phillip the First became president, and when Jens found that Kelvin actually meant to declare himself emperor, to the exclusion of Breed and everybody else, he set up a system of spies of his own, and helped Blagg place the bombs that were intended to blow Kelvin out of his throne! All this, mind you, in spite of the fact that he does not quite approve of everything that has been done by our royal friend

back here, and that he does not believe any one man should control so much cash."

"Cash!" suddenly broke in the shrill voice of Breed, and the crown bumped from his glistening bald head upon the table in front of him and rolled to the floor. "Cash!" and his wrinkled old face weazened into an expression of desperate intentness. "The greatest force in all the world! The power that can totter thrones and disrupt governments; that can cause wars and support them and end them; that can build cities and devastate them! Cash! The life blood of commerce! The great social dynamo! The golden lever of Archimedes! Cash!" His voice rose in a shrill crescendo, but before its quaverings had ceased there came another sound much more startling — the unmistakable, never-to-be-forgotten *Marseillaise*!

It was not musical, that song, with its untuned voices and its melody all awry, but there was an exultant insistence upon the measured rhythm that arrested instant attention. There seemed, as it approached, as gusts of wind made it more sharply audible, as it mounted in volume, a demoniacal fury in it.

Every blind, including the heavy curtains behind the glass at the doors, had been drawn. Now Nelson suddenly snapped a button that threw the library

in darkness, and going to one of the windows that gave upon the front driveway, opened a blind. The red flare of torches could be seen between the trees. There came a loud cheer, impregnated with the same fury as the song, and then the blows of rails and logs upon the heavy iron gates, a fusillade of shots from the rifles of the guards, screams of agony and answering shots.

"Too late!" groaned Rollins. "It is not Kelvin's army but Blagg's. God help us!"

A piercing scream, as if it might have been that of a cat in mortal anguish, came from the end of the room where Henry Breed sat alone nodding his head and mumbling and mowing in his pitiful pomp.

"Cash!" he shrilled. "My cash!"

There was a metallic crash and another mad cheer. The gates had given way, and then they came pouring in. The high pitched voice of a woman suddenly broke again into the frenzied song of *The Marseillaise*, and a shouting chorus, out of all semblance of tune but with wonderful rhythm, caught it up. A torch darted into the open around the far bend. Rollins, who was unconsciously reaching back for his pistol, found his fingers caught in a soft hand, and felt a gentle pull. He obeyed the tugging immediately and allowed himself to be led. Outside the door, in the dim light of the hall, Elsie

White, still leading the way toward the rear of the building, looked up at him with terror-widened eyes.

"This way," she urged. "I must hide you."

"My men!" he protested. "They should be approaching the grounds by this time, and now I must lead them by a different way."

"Don't go!" she begged of him. "If they see you crossing the open spaces they will chase you and shoot you as they would a wild animal."

"I can not help it," he answered calmly. "I must go."

He raced on through to the kitchen hall, but he did not let go of her hand; and now it was he who led. He reached the rear door and threw it open.

"Come," he said simply.

She looked up at him a moment and then gently stepped out beside him, closing the door after her. He paused for a moment, with sudden mastery, to gather her in his arms, and for just that moment she laid her head in surrender upon his shoulder. She knew now that her dreams of Kelvin had been but the outcome of a youthful ideal; an ideal which had made her see Phillip through distorted eyes, which had clouded her vision to this sterling love, which had nearly wrecked her happiness for life. But now, thank God, it was over, and her own pure heart was come into the keeping of one worthy of that priceless gift. Rollins lifted her head

gently, stooped down and kissed her full upon the warm red lips, and then he took her hand again.

“It looks like desertion,” said he, “but we can do no good here.”

He struck out with her along the path, but she pulled against his direction.

“This way,” she insisted; “straight back from the house to the garden and around past the kennels. Then we can be under cover all the way.”

He looked down at her critically. Fortunately her dress was dark. They raced away into the shelter of the dark shrubbery, a path that he would not have dared to choose in his haste; but Elsie, who was familiar with every foot of the ground, bent her head and guided him by many turns and twists into a screen of impenetrable blackness.

In the meantime, in the library, the voice of Jens Nelson, cool and collected, inquired:

“How shall we prepare to die? Standing or crouching?”

He drew down the blind, and, making his way to the other side of the room, once more turned the switch button.

Doctor Zelphan, standing where he had been, looked swiftly about the room. They two were the only occupants.

“It seems,” he said with a short laugh, “that the others have already made their choice. The ma-

jority rules, and I shall follow. Only the young insist upon dying gaudily. For myself, I have still to finish my book."

He had moved rapidly across the room to the hall door as he spoke. The menacing song of *The Marseillaise*, now but a roaring series of accented shouts, was quite near. Two sharp, resounding shots echoed just outside the hall door.

"The guards!" exclaimed Zelphan. "They are still at the door. There is a part of your America, the part that I love. What wonderful material for my book. Come! If we must die let us die crouching," and without waiting he raced up the stairs, heading toward the attic.

Nelson hesitated a moment. Two more shots rang out, followed by howls of hate, and then a fusillade of bullets spattered against the walls, crashed through the glass, and imbedded themselves with soft thuds into the heavy woodwork of the doors. Nelson hesitated no longer but followed the doctor.

CHAPTER XXXI

LILLIAN TAKES POSSESSION OF HER INHERITANCE

THE doors offered but a brief resistance, after the two guards had been beaten down and torn and snarled over, and then the dust-blackened mob came bursting in, at their head Lillian Breed, the incarnation of wild atavic gypsyhood, the incarnation of hell-apprenticed beauty, the incarnation of all the evil things that are red, her cheeks aflame to vie with the carmine of the knotted kerchief in her black hair, her ruby-tinted gown slashed and ribboned and frayed, and one rounded bare arm, upon which was a slight flesh wound and a trickle of shining crimson, hanging entirely without the torn sleeve. Her eyes were flaming and her scarlet lips were parted in a mocking laugh.

“Welcome to our home!” she cried, half turning to the rabble and throwing her right arm aloft, the bare one with the red streak upon it, and, thrusting her left arm beneath that of Blagg, she wheeled with him into the library, while their fol-

lowers poured after them like a foul flood throughout the house.

There was an almost instant breaking of china and rending of draperies, with the shrill laughter of mad women above all, sounds of vandal devastation and destruction at which Lillian only laughed aloud.

“Help yourselves, my good friends,” she shouted. “The house is yours and all that it contains, even to its unwelcoming hosts, if you find them.”

No fiend could have laughed more evilly than she. In the library Blagg jumped upon the very table which Breed had so lately quitted, and clapped his hands for silence.

“Order there!” he shouted, and stamped heavily with his nail-studded heel upon the polished mahogany of the table top.

“Who orders order?” roared a half drunken tinner, who had already secured a decanter from the dining-room and now crowded into the door. His face was blackened with powder smoke; over his left eye there was a broad patch of darkened dry blood; his thick lips were parted in a ribald grin. He raised the decanter to his lips and took a long pull of the liquor. “Who orders order?” he repeated, shoving his way forward into the room. “Orders are for slaves! I defy orders! To hell with orders!”

A lean little man with eyes as sharp as steel needles and with a pointed nose and a pointed chin and curiously overhanging brow, and long, thin arms, suddenly whipped a knife from his belt and stabbed the tinner in the throat. He fell without a groan. Those around him only laughed, but order was obtained.

“This is business, in the name of liberty and equality!” commanded Blagg. “Hold yourselves in restraint. Remember that we came here to get a billion and a half of dollars for the cause. Every one of you must help us to carry it from here, and remember that we have all sworn to kill the first man who tries to make away with any of it or to appropriate a dollar to his own uses. After we have established equality and fraternity, then every man may do as he likes, but to-night we must act for the common weal. Come forward as your names are called. Meyers!” The lean little man who had stabbed the tinner pressed forward to the table. “Trellis!” A stoop-shouldered man with a dished-in face joined Meyers. “White!” The father of Elsie White, gray and fat and with the light of foolish zealotry in his eyes pushed eagerly to the front. “Gilman! Owens! Hibbard! Schultz! Garvin! Boyer!”

They came to him as he called until he had named a score of names.

"That is all for now," he directed. "The rest of you wait here in your detachments of tens until you are called from below."

Lillian had stood at the side of the fireplace, her hand upon the knob of the little door which led into her grandfather's retiring room. Now Blagg jumped down from the table to her side, and together they threw open the door. Lillian broke out, instantly, into a shrill laugh.

"Why, look who's here!" she cried. "If it isn't my dear old friend, Mrs. Rensselaer."

Mrs. Rensselaer stepped back from her vain attempts to bolt the door, and, with her hand resting easily upon the foot of Breed's couch, looked quietly at Lillian, waiting. With her gray hair and her neat gown and her calm dignity she overawed Lillian for a moment, and then anger came as a natural reaction.

"Why, how delightful!" said Lillian with mock suavity. "Mrs. Rensselaer, you must come out and let me introduce you to some of my friends. Ladies!" she called. "I am going to turn Mrs. Rensselaer over to the reception committee."

The women, hideous travesties of their sex in all their grim frowns and excitement, grinned and pressed forward.

"This is Mrs. Rensselaer," continued Lillian, dragging forth her many years' companion. "She

is the last lady of one of our very, very oldest families. None of her ancestry has worked since America was a nation. Her nephew is General Rensselaer, who is commander-in-chief of the army of Emperor Kelvin, Phillip the First! I know you will enjoy her society."

Her mocking laugh seemed enough hint as she thrust Mrs. Rensselaer into the library. A brazen woman, fat and gross, and with hideous lips burned dark as with a fever, caught Mrs. Rensselaer by the hand and jerked her forward. A mere slip of a girl, thin and formless, but whose face already bore the unmistakable traces of living death, laughed a shrill laugh, and, with a soiled cap that had once been a boy's, slapped Mrs. Rensselaer across the face.

Flushing red with the indignity, Mrs. Rensselaer turned to Lillian, but she had neither time to protest nor need of it, for Lillian, obeying another of the sudden tigerish impulses to which in the past week she had wholly given herself, changed her attitude completely and with blazing eyes rushed between Mrs. Rensselaer and her tormentors.

"That will do!" she cried. "Mrs. Rensselaer was my friend for a great many years and treated me more patiently than I deserved. She is my guest now and must be respected as such. Mrs. Rensselaer, sit here," and she seated her one-time

social tutor and sponsor behind the library table, in the chair that Breed had lately vacated. "Whitney! Gaspar! Williams! Harvey! Perth! Green! Stand around this table and protect her from any further insults, in my name! As for you," and she turned to the young woman who had slapped Mrs. Rensselaer. Her eyes narrowed and grew cold as she confronted the girl. She walked closer to her, gazing steadily and cruelly into the pale gray eyes that now widened with consternation. Suddenly giving way to her unbridled whim she picked out two of the other men and pushed the girl with sudden violence into their arms.

"Take her out and throw her in the lake," she directed.

The men, laughing cruelly, seized hold of her and began dragging her toward the door.

"But I can't swim!" shrieked the girl.

"That's why I am having you thrown in the lake," said Lillian coolly. "The rest of you will take note by this that Mrs. Rensselaer is to be protected."

She started back toward the door of the smaller room. The girl, struggling against the two who had her in charge, suddenly burst into a stream of vituperative profanity, so vicious and so foul that even Lillian, inured as she was by the past week's experience to language of the sort, shuddered, and ran

from the room. She paused in the door to look at Mrs. Rensselaer, and for a moment wonder and admiration for that woman's poise, even in the face of this trying position, came over her. There was something in the pride of birth, something in the influence of a long line of honored ancestry, a gift, intangible and inexplicable, but none the less real, over which she marveled, as have thousands of others descended of coarser clay, since society emerged from its swaddling clothes; and when she discovered awe of it in herself, like all her kind she resented it.

"I must have your rings and your brooch, I think, Mrs. Rensselaer," said she, and swiftly going behind the table she disengaged the diamond cluster from Mrs. Rensselaer's throat and stripped the rings from the unresisting fingers. Even as she did this her mood changed again, and she whispered: "It is the best thing for you." Taking the jewels in her hand she cried: "A gift from aristocracy to equality and fraternity!" and she tossed them in the air.

A hundred hands reached for them as they came down, and a clamor of excited voices told how popular that action had been. Lillian glanced at the scramble with her lip curled for a second in scorn, then she turned to Blagg briskly.

"Come on," she said, "we have work to do,"

and, followed by Blagg and his score of picked men, she hurried through the little rear room.

They found the closet door open, and its rear wall pushed back, revealing the narrow secret staircase. Single file they hurriedly descended this, Lillian at the head, and turned into the wide cemented vestibule, where an electric light was already burning. Lillian dropped down before the combination knob and turned it carefully backward and forward, several times.

"I feared so," she said to Blagg, who knelt beside her. "The combination has been changed."

Blagg took the knob in his long, sensitive fingers and, not looking at it, bent his ear close to it, while Lillian laid her bare arm loosely across his shoulders. He turned the knob slowly and gently; he stopped and turned it backward, slowly and gently; he stopped and turned it forward and backward and forward again, with deft sureness of touch and hearing, and then smiled as he gave the ring of the door a clutch and pulled. The door came open.

"It's a good thing that I practised those long, long hours every night on that sample knob in my room up-stairs," he said as he went in to the next one.

He did not wait for Lillian to try this, but depended again upon his own touch and hearing.

Slowly, but with remarkable skill, he worked his way through the four iron doors, until, with Lillian by his side, he had thrown the last one open; and there, in the vault, with a great pile of gold and bills scattered thickly about him and empty drawers lying in confusion everywhere, with his robe and crown still on and his scepter in his hand, stood Henry Breed.

“Cash!” he cried. “Cash! The greatest force in all the world. The power that can totter thrones and disrupt governments; that can cause wars and support them and end them; that can build cities and devastate them! Cash! The life blood of commerce! The great social dynamo! The golden lever of Archimedes! Cash! Salute your master, Cash, loyal subjects, and your master’s master, the King of Cash!”

“Grandfather!” said Lillian hurrying to him. “Come with me. We want to put this money away and lock it up so no one can get it. See, you have left all the doors open!”

A mere fleeting trace of his old shrewdness came into his eyes.

“Why, I thought I closed them,” he quavered. “Yes, yes, we must hurry and put it back,” and stooping, his crown rolling down among the money in the process, he began to gather up handfuls of bills.

The babble of voices from the upper part of the house, as some one opened the door of the little room back of the library, came sharply down to them. At the sound he straightened up and his dim old eyes grew wide.

"Hush! They are coming!" he said. "They sha'n't have it!" he suddenly screamed. "It is mine! Mine! Every dollar of it!"

He rushed toward the door to close it, but he stumbled and fell upon the floor, and lay quite still.

"Come here, two of you fellows," called Lillian briskly, back to business once more. "Pick him up and carry him into the little corner at the side of the stairway, where it is light and cool. I think he has only fainted. George, you might as well begin."

As soon as Henry Breed was carried out there was room for the full score of men in the big vault, and Blagg called them all in by name, each one, as he came forward, loosing two long, brown sacks from about his middle.

"Gather up the money from the floor first," Blagg directed, "then take the drawers systematically, beginning at the bottom and working up."

Eagerly the men began filling their sacks, with many exclamations of animal gratification as the silken feel of the paper and the metallic touch of the metal glided through their fingers.

CHAPTER XXXII

PHILLIP THE FIRST AND THE KING OF CASH COME
EACH TO THE END OF HIS JOURNEY

IN that deep vault sounds from without were but silences, except as they burst down when the door was opened from above. There was plenty of it to hear, however, for there was mad revelry throughout all the place. The gentlemen and ladies of equality and fraternity had, first of all, hunted out the stores of food and liquor. These despatched, amid much shouting and quarreling, they swarmed over the house like rats, seeking what they might pilfer or destroy. A fire could have gutted the place no worse. Next, the madness to hunt and bring to bay and kill came upon them, and now the very nature of their bodies changed, as, with noses thrust forward and legs bent and talon-curved fingers at the ends of their backward-swung hands they searched with almost whining eagerness in every nook and cranny large enough to conceal human life. They did not find Zelphan but they did find Jens, and when he realized that concealment was no longer possible, he stepped out and faced

them, and fought and died standing as he had preferred.

Had he remained concealed for but a few brief moments he might still have lived, for there came suddenly upon the big gray house a new and a terrible sound, borne by swift, shadowy engines that swept upward along the wide curving driveway almost noiseless, except for a rush and a whirr. Out of the purring silence, they burst upon the rabble outside with a sharp rattling hailstorm of leaden death!

Kelvin and his squad of flying Gattlings had arrived, and close behind him trotted the detachment that had been bivouacked nearest the gates. He had come upon those outside stragglers so swiftly that there had been no time to escape his instantaneous engines of destruction, which, sweeping from side to side, mowed down men as if they had been weeds. Stalwart men in khaki sprang upon the steps. There were a few survivors and these, in their panic, the footmen took care of, while other stalwarts carried a Gattling and planted it in the very doorway, pouring its deadly blight back into the hall. They set it up next at the library door, and swept that room as bare and clear of living humanity as if a flood had washed it out, while the men in khaki swarmed through the house, pursuing the followers of Blagg into bloody corners and exterminating them as if they had been vermin. A detachment,

with Rensselaer and Kelvin in the lead, stepped over the ghastly, huddled heaps in the library, hurried back through the little room, and poured down the narrow secret stairway. As they had swept through the library Rensselaer had caught a brief glimpse of a gray-haired woman in a black silk gown, with her head upon her folded arms, sitting at the table, but the picture was confused with others of its riddled and useless kind, and he hurried on ahead.

Kelvin had promised himself to be in the lead as they went down the stairway, but as he turned into the closet entrance, a huge black form thrust itself in before him, and Sam, the long scar upon his left cheek grown livid and his huge mouth distended in a grin that displayed his yellow teeth, and crooning, actually crooning one of those wild melodies of the old plantation days, led the way, unarmed except for the formidable weapons with which nature had provided him.

There had been shouts before this, so no new shouts disturbed the workers in the vault. What little noise the Gattlings had made had sounded but like a sprinkle of rain upon leaves, and the greedy garnerers of Breed's golden harvest were taken by complete surprise. They turned from their tasks as the men in khaki streamed in upon them, but their weapons had been laid aside and they had only

bags of money with which to fight; and these were too heavy!

Sam was shouting aloud. An irresistible demon, he clutched first one thin throat in his mighty hands and cracked it and threw the limp, resistless body aside and sprang for another; and the second man to fall before his savage onslaught was Ben White.

Blagg, with a mighty oath, sprang for Kelvin, who had entered just behind Sam, but one of Rensselaer's lieutenants was quick enough to intercept him. Blagg blindly fought off this man. He had eyes only for Kelvin, just for Kelvin! In a moment the place was a purgatory of weaving, straining forms; but through all his struggle with his own adversary, Blagg never took his eyes from Phillip. Finally, with his arms clasped about the middle of the lieutenant, he gradually bent his assailant backward, and in the act managed to draw the lieutenant's pistol from its holster. In place of turning it upon his own antagonist, he leveled it over the man's shoulder straight at Kelvin!

It was Sam, who, shouting in a fever of savage joy, saw that motion and sprang to wrest the pistol from Blagg. He only succeeded in placing his body between the pistol and his master, and, with his big hands upon the shoulders of the two struggling men in front of him, received in his own breast the

three bullets that the firearm yet contained. Then, his work done, he fell heavily to the floor, and upon his face was fixed for ever that same sardonic grin that displayed all his snarling yellow teeth.

Kelvin, spent with his own efforts, stood erect to breathe for a moment, and in that moment a needle-sharp dagger was thrust into his side. He tottered and fell, and above him knelt Lillian Breed, while before his eyes she held the dagger.

"See!" she cried. "This was your emblem of triumph! This was the sign in which you were to conquer! This was the instrument that twice threatened you and twice failed; but the third time it wins! Phillip, you made but one mistake. Had you put me at your side as your Empress, in this sign," and she held the dagger point upward, "we would have conquered the world; but you repudiated me, and in this sign you die!"

Kelvin turned his face wearily away. The gesture maddened her and in fury she would have raised the dagger again to smite him with it, but one of the throng of soldiers who were still pouring in, struck it from her hand and overpowered her and bound her arms behind her, as those of Blagg had already been bound. Except for these two, not one of the despoilers in the vault was able to do damage, and Rensselaer, unscathed, looked down upon Phillip with tears moistening his eyes. He

choked them back, however, as he thought became a soldier.

“Take him out carefully, boys,” he said; “but get him into the air quickly!”

He himself took Phillip’s shoulders, and carefully, gently, they bore him up the narrow stairway and through the shambles that had once been a library. As they passed through that room Rensselaer’s eye happened to rest again upon that motionless, gray-haired woman at the library table, struck down by his own Gattling, and as he recognized her he turned faint and almost dropped his burden.

“Here,” he told one of his men, “help carry him. I can not.”

He almost stumbled into the outer air, and the men followed him with Kelvin, and, covering him to the breast with a sheet hastily snatched from Breed’s couch, laid the first and last Emperor of America flat upon the porch at the edge of the steps, where the cooling breeze might blow upon his brow, and the brightest star in the sky, his “star of destiny,” might beam down mockingly upon him. There was no foe at hand, for all the present foe had been despatched, and the soldiers turned as with one impulse toward the spot where the leader they had followed lay pale and rigid under the yellow porch light; and this yellow light was, in a moment more, augmented by a saffron glare that flared out as the

roof, from a fire in the attic, started by the recent vandals, broke into a blaze!

“Charge!” came a sudden sharp voice from the shrubbery.

Startled, in the glare of the burning roof Rensselaer saw a host of men, with fixed bayonets, suddenly spring out of the dark shrubbery at the northwest side of the building and come tearing down upon them, braving a hand to hand conflict immediately upon their sudden discovery in the broad light.

“Left face! Present arms!” came the sharp command of Rensselaer.

The word “Fire” was just trembling upon his lips when he recognized the advancing leader, rushing with drawn saber and pistol at the side of the first line in the column.

“Halt! For God’s sake, halt!” he cried, jumping down from the porch before his men and facing the oncoming ranks, waving the white sheet that he had snatched from across Kelvin. “A truce! For God’s sake, Rollins, halt your men! This madness is all over! Kelvin is dead!”

Within but a few feet of what must otherwise have been a desperate struggle, the advancing column was checked, and Rollins heard briefly from the sickened Rensselaer what had happened. He

strode up the steps and stood before Kelvin with bared head.

"Only mistaken," he said in benediction and forgiveness. Then he turned to his own followers and those of Rensselaer. "As President of the United States, vice Kelvin, I have become your chief commanding officer," he told them. "Kelvin is dead, but the republic still lives. Blagg and his consort will die this morning, and with them the rebellion is broken. There will be fighting yet, some little, and turmoil and hardship before peace is restored to us; and some restrictive legislation, to be carefully and wisely considered, must be made to keep down such appalling accumulations of wealth as may threaten our liberty and our republic; but, gentlemen, through it all the Constitution of the United States still is sacred and supreme, and there," his voice took on a sudden ring of exultation, "and there waves its everlasting emblem!"

One grizzled old veteran, of Sumner Rollins' ranks, had brought with him, so tightly folded that it might have been taken as a pike, a tattered old American flag that had gone through the war of the North and South, and had now flung its war-stained stars and stripes to their gaze. There was a cheer, but only a feeble one. After all the turmoil and its solemn ending, the sight of this almost for-

gotten banner proved too much for wild cheering, and instead, the men, almost with one accord, took off their hats, and moisture stood in their eyes.

A strange figure appeared among them. Old Henry Breed, still clad in his mockery of royal raiment, staggered to the door. In his fall and through all that succeeded it, his hands had convulsively gripped his money, and he still held it, green and orange, in his fingers.

“Cash!” his shrill old voice quavered as he flaunted it in the air. “Cash! The greatest force in all the world! The power that can totter thrones and disrupt governments; that can cause wars and support them and end them; that can build cities and devastate them; that can crush all life and destroy all happiness and debauch all honor! Cash! The life blood of commerce! The great social dynamo! The golden lever of Archimedes! Cash!”

He stopped to laugh shrilly, and allowed a soldier to seat him in a chair where he drooled off into a jibbering mumbling. As he left the doorway his place was taken by Doctor Zelphan, his cap on his head, his twinkling eyes gleaming through his thick spectacles and his red beard pointed straight out. Both hands were filled with shawl-strapped packages of his precious manuscript. It was all he had cared to save from the flames. He looked down at Breed a moment in contemplative pity.

“He will die the way he is now,” said he. “His once remarkable brain is mere mush. He was a wonderful study, a most wonderful study, and the nearest approach to an absolute monarch of any resident of this globe. In the meantime, gentlemen, America has had her orgasm and her nerves will be quieter now. I bid you good day. I am going to Switzerland,” and he strode down the drive and around the trees at the bend.

Running around the corner came Elsie White, who had been bidden to stay back in safety, but who could not, and Rollins drew her to his side. The wind, blowing away some fleecy clouds, revealed in the east the first rosy glow of coming day, and the same grim old veteran who had brought with him the war-stained battle flag, broke in trembling accents into a song that cleared the still quivering air of the fevered *Marseillaise*, that was caught up by a mighty chorus of newly freed men, that was at once the requiescat of Kelvin, a benediction, and the promise of a new birth for the republic he had almost throttled:

“Oh say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last
gleaming!”

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